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William Tell

A Drama

Arthur Dougherty Rees

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WILLIAM TELL

William Tell

A Drama of the
Origin of Swiss Democracy

By
Arthur Dougherty Rees
Author of
"The Double Love" "Columbus"

Philadelphia
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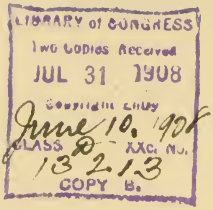

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BY
A. D. REES

THE SPIRIT OF THIS DRAMA
IS
DEDICATED
TO THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN PROGRESS WHICH
HAVE REARED
THE PEOPLE OF SWITZERLAND
FROM THE CONDITION OF CRUDE INDIVIDUALITY
AND DEMOCRACY
OF SIX HUNDRED YEARS AGO
TO THEIR PRESENT POSITION AS A SPLENDID EXAMPLE
TO THE WORLD
OF
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE
AND
FOR THE PEOPLE.

INTRODUCTION

This drama presents at least one distinctive addition to the Tell literature, namely: the dramatic form in which it is cast; five acts, related intimately by the sequence of events portrayed, and the absence of the usual divisions into scenes.

The play has been constructed without regard for the historical criticism that has greatly shorn the original legend of its fiction. It aims to depict not merely the Tell episode, but the movement of that epoch toward freedom and the unity of Switzerland. Therefore, I have introduced in the final act the death of the Austrian King and the Swiss victory at Morgarten,—which events took place somewhat later than the others. Whatever similarity this play may have to any of the other Tell dramas, is due almost entirely to the legend itself and a similarity of historical sources, for there are extremely few adaptions from previous plays, and those that do exist—less than a half dozen,—are but minor details.

A. D. R.

PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA.
December, 1907.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

Of Uri.

The Baron of Attinghausen.
Walter Furst.
Johann Furst, his son.
William Tell.
Hedwig, his wife.
Walter and William, his sons.
Margreth of Seelisberg.
Heinrich Tuss, a hunter.
Franz, the ferryman.
Landvogt Trautman.
Peter Gerig.
Klegter, a priest.
Hans Ludwig.
Jacob Lusser.
Steffan, Uli, Seppi } Shepherds.
Gessler, Governor of Uri and Schwytz.

Of Unterwalden.

Henri Melchthal.
Arnold Melchthal.
Conrad, Casper, Reding } Huntsmen.
Conrad Baumgarten.
Johann Staiger.
Heinrich Kass.
Winkelried.
Landenberg, Governor of Unterwalden.

Of Schwytz.

Werner Stouffacher.
Gertrude, his wife.
Hans Hueber.
Hans Gross.
Vogt Zweyer.
Conrad Hum.
Peter Moohr, a hunter.

An Austrian Nobleman, an overseer, workmen, shopkeepers, peasants, women and girls; guards, troops, huntsmen, fishermen, judges of the sports, horsemen of the governors, servants, spies and a messenger.

William Tell

ACT I

On a broad grassy plot by the shore of Lake Lucerne near Treib. A ferry-house is at the right extremity and at the left a road that leads to the village.

Opposite can be seen, at the right, the peaks, Hacken and Great Mythen; at the left, the crest of the Rigi. Between them lie the farms and hills of the Canton Schwytz.

The scene opens as the autumn sports and festival are about to end. Many of the people are seated about, including shepherd boys, huntsmen, fishermen; William Tell, his wife and his two sons. All are watching the wrestling match.

Archers, stone throwers, runners and wrestlers are also looking at the contest. Two venerable men, Walter Furst, with a sword buckled at his side, and the aged Baron of Attinghausen, with his sword and shield, holding his helmet in his hand, occupy seats of honor. Near them are the judges of the contest and the gayly decorated musicians. As the curtain rises the two wrestlers are seen contending with each other. An instant later one of them is thrown on his back upon the grass. The Alpine horns are blown and the people shout. The judges declare that Reding, the huntsman, has won. The wrestlers arise, and retire among the people.

MARGRETH. Reding, the huntsman, champion wrestler, too!

A JUDGE. (*Pointing to the left.*) Here come the runners! Make ye way for them!

(*The people look and draw back; the judge marks a line upon the ground in front of Furst and the Baron. The girls shout and clap their hands. Alpine horns are blown.*)

GIRLS. O see them coming! Seppi! Seppi! fast!

BOYS. Casper, Casper, run it harder, Casper!

(*Judges take their stand near the line and an instant later, five racers rush in from the left. Seppi, the shepherd boy, leads and crosses the line first. The others follow quickly, amid shouts and blasts of horns. All take their places among the other participants.*)

JUDGE. Seppi, the shepherd, wins the distance race. (*More shouts and blasts of horns.*) Now let the archers come!

GIRLS. The archers! Good!

Tell, Reding, Conrad and Casper, all huntsmen, come forward; each with a cross-bow in hand.)

BARON. (*To Furst.*) What splendid men they are!

FURST. Yes; Schwitz's * best.

JUDGE. Now, archers, shoot. The target's on that rock.

(*Points to it at the left, beyond the scene. Tell and the archers stand in a row facing it. Reding shoots first and misses.*)

REDING. A miss! I'll try again. (*Retires.*)

CASPER. (*After shooting his arrow.*) A hit! a hit!

(*The people applaud.*)

---

* Schwitz refers to the three cantons as a whole; Schwytz, to the single canton only.

JUDGE. Yes; 'tis a hit. Now Conrad.

CONRAD. (*After shooting.*) Another hit.

JUDGE. But not so fine as Casper's; Tell, you shoot.

(*Tell stands looking about him. He sees a bird overhead.*)

TELL. Look, look! that nuthatch flying, whose blue wings,
Make Heaven's azure pale!

(*All look up. Tell raises his bow; aims and shoots. The bird falls and he runs and picks it up. Great applause from the people. One of the huntsmen breaks into a joyous yodel.*)

TELL. My trusty bow,
I am well pleased with thee!

JUDGE. If any wish
To try their skill in such a way, there are
More birds above.

BARON. But no more archers, Judge,
With such an aim.

JUDGE. Since none dare try, the prize
In archery, is given to William Tell.

(*Great applause. Alpine horns are blown. Tell's boys run and greet him and he retires with them to Hedwig.*)

BARON. Let's have some singing now.

(*Musicians play the Ranz des Vaches. Some of the girls dance about with the young men. Margreth of Seelisberg begins to sing, spontaneously, and all stop to listen to her. As she does so, Peter Moohr, a huntsman, enters at the left, with his cross-bow on his shoulder, and joins the company.*)

MARGRETH.

Come home, come home, my hunter lad,
The glacier's wild is cold;
The crag is sunless; I am sad
And misty is the wold!

O seek the meadow marginned lake
And scale the ridge no more;
Nor hunt the chamois in the brake
Nor leap the chasms o'er!

Say thou farewell to mountain skies
And to the crest's retreat;
The willow lashes of mine eyes
Sway with mine own heart's beat!
The latticed grass blades yet are green;—
All white the mountain's dome;—
Forsake the cliffs that intervene,
Come home, my lad, come home!

Look, lad, the summer shuts her eye;
The mountain cots grow cold;
Of Rigi's rose, the petals lie
All scattered thru the wold.
Come home, the winter opes his hands;
The hoarfrost fills the dale,
And Mythen's crest of silver strands
The deeper chains the vale!

Come home, my hunter lad, come home!
Ye winds, waft well my lay,
From Gotthardt's gorge to Rigi's dome
Where'er my lad doth stray!

(*The people murmur in approbation.*)

BARON. 'Tis beautiful, 'tis beautiful, my girl.
But who may be thy hunter lad? Pray tell!
MARG. (*Diffidently.*) Heinrich Tuss.
BARON. And has he been long away?

MARG. O yes, too long!
MOOHR. (*Approaching the Baron.*) Heinrich Tuss?
MARG. You know him?
MOOHR. I know him, yes. We hunted yesterday
Beyond the Rigi; on its western slopes
Near Küssnacht; killed a vulture there. It fell
Within the governor's castle-fields. Tuss ran
To pick it up, but being seized himself
For trespass,—thievery, they said,—was thrown
Within the castle's keep, where he is now.
MARG. O God, my hunter lad, my own!
BARON. Foul deed!
FURST. Dost thou speak truly, Moohr?
MOOHR. Yes sir, I do.

(*The people show indignation; listen intensely.*)

MARG. Thy words have ravished my upward gaze!
The Heaven is not blue,—my heart is scarred,
And mars the seeing of mine eyes! O God,
Devise thou freedom for my lad, confined
In dungeon airs of Küssnacht's keep! Gessler
I hate thee, and these arms, so maiden-soft;
My heart, bulwarked by sudden hardness now,
Together do conspire against thy power!
O help me,—some one, quickly! Hold me up!

(*Three girls rush forward to her and she falls into their arms. They lead her to their seats.*)

BARON. O what a land, where tyrant governors
Bold with abuse of power, do thus enclose
A maiden's lover in a stony keep!
TELL. (*Arising suddenly and coming forward.*)
He builds a keep in Uri, well ye know it.

Alas, of yore, what had we but these walls,—
These noble mountains, roofed with Heaven's stars!
Such sloping battlements are welcome pris'ns,
Well mortised by the handiwork of God.
But now, O countrymen, within
The holy chancel of our land, which He
Hath dowered so well, the tyrant's pris'n blasphemes
Our altar thrones,—those snowy crests!
Its mute stones brand us slaves; its growing walls
Are but o'erarching frowns that threaten us
And so restrain our ancient liberties!

(*Returns abruptly to his seat.*)

BARON. My people, tenants, shepherds, herdsmen, all!
Hear ye the tumult of my breaking heart!
Behold our joys curtailed; our spirits depressed
And cheated of their normal flow! Alas,
A barren benediction of a happy day!
Almighty God, doth thy protection wane?
Why must our liberty be ruined? our vales,
Filled with the precious blessing from thy hills,
Become unfruitful by the curse of war?

FURST. We must be free from tyranny.

TELL. We must.

BARON. My people, see how old I grow! When spring
Shall kindly reap those slow descending snows
And Hacken lifts the white veil from her feet,
I may not hear the huntsman's blowing horn,
Nor watch my flocks, whose sweet crest-footings now
So leisurely descend before the snows,
Return to crop the pasture's verdant prime
Upon those self-same slopes.

HERDSMAN. Good Baron, thou shalt!

A PEASANT WOMAN. Yes, yes; beloved Baron, thou shalt be here.

BARON. O my good people, many festivals,
In spring and autumn, have I seen. This one
Doth wedge more sadness in my heart than any.
Mine eyes see and my heart feels what hath not
Been seen and felt before, O gentle Peace,
Stay with us yet! But ah! we must be free.
Let not the cadence of the cow-herd's horn
Be changed to martial measures; nor warrior's blasts,—
Precessionals of Austria's power,—bestride
The saddles 'tween our mountain peaks, nor smite
Our shepherds' voices with their vocals rude!
My people, thus would I leave peace with you!
And then our maids and mothers need not mourn.
I've seen the fierce wars in the forest vales
Around this lake when Schwytz and Uri leagued.
Let them not come again!
Ye silver stars, shine thru these swarthy clouds
That gather now! Ye blessed winds of Heav'n,
Scatter their black and ominous tresses forth,
Or let the whirling fohn,* braid all their folds
Into a thong for the oppressor's limbs!
Let not the Heaven's silver be, O God,
So bartered for the gleam of brandished swords
That their swift circles o'er our heads shall hide
The placid stars that ever plot for peace!

FURST. And may thy prayer be realized 'mongst us all.

---

* The fohn is a violent windstorm.

A Peasant Woman. Good Baron, we love thee!
2nd Peasant Woman. Aye, we do love thee.
Baron. Farewell, our sports; farewell, my people, too.
Ye have my parting wish. O! I have climbed
Life's ledges o'er; traversed the woods and now
I stand beyond the beech and past the pine,
Anear the clearing where the mountain's crown
Is tonsured of the fir; where th' edelweiss,
Emblem of Death and comrade of the snows,
Administers its sacrament to my soul,
As its pale petals, by the glaciers verge,
Apparelled in the whitened radiance
Of mountain crests, receive their own from God.

(The sky becomes clouded over; winds blow harder and mists gather in the distance.)

Furst. Good Baron, thy people pray for thee and wish
Thee many years of earthly joy with them.
But now 'tis time to turn toward home. 'Twill rain
Within an hour. See how the swallows skim
The ruffled lake. The fishes hurdle o'er
The little waves.
Casper. And yonder peaks
Draw on their ashen hoods.
Baron. Let all go home.

(Horns are sounded; the sky becomes more overcast and the winds blow still harder. Thunder rumbles afar off. As the horns sound again, Franz, the ferryman, rushes in from the right, singing in a monotone.)

Franz. Behold ye the mist,
The Vale-king's white poll,
Which the thunder's wild charges from ridges unroll!

Act I

Hear ye the wild roar
Of the wind smitten boughs,
As they shrink from the grasp of the fohn's wild carouse!

Great Axenberg groans;
The chamois take flight
And the wind will soon bend a cross-bow in its might.

O see yonder crest
Now hooded in grey.
The sun cannot show the poor huntsman his way!

From yonder high gorge,
The storm cloud's first lair,
Tempestuous couriers, ride forth thru the air!

The fohn's on the lake;
'Tis past yonder shore,
So put out your hearth fires and watch till 'tis o'er!

(*Horns sound; the ferryman runs to the ferry-house; looks over the lake. The people arise hurriedly and go out at the left. Tell bids his wife and children go and remains on the scene with the ferryman. Winds blow harder; thunder roars; waves strike on the shore.*)

FRANZ. Ah! but this is a bad blow.

TELL. There are worse blows than this.

FRANZ. There never was a lake like this, nor a river either. If the devil should die and his spirit inhabit these waters, there could not be a worse rumpus. What do you think?

TELL. The devil won't die.

(*Winds and thunder.*)

FRANZ. Well, then there'll be one fohn the less.

TELL. Just so.

FRANZ. Ah, but see those waves. I say, tho, does the devil carry a cross-bow?

TELL. I don't know.

FRANZ. Well, you said he wouldn't die and I thought you might know more of him.

TELL. I'm not troubled with that devil.

FRANZ. Then suppose Gessler would die, and I should ferry him over to Schwytz, would there be another fohn?

TELL. No.

FRANZ. What would happen then?

TELL. Peace.

(*Wind blows and rattles the roof of the ferry-house.*)

FRANZ. Alack! The fohn would steal my boat-house roof. I'll put this stone on the top of it.

(*Lifts a big stone from the ground and places it on the roof.*)

Blow that away, if you can! (*Turning to Tell.*)
What do you want, standing here this way?

TELL. I want to get over to Steinen when the wind's done driving so, and besides, I like to watch the storm.

FRANZ. Well, you can watch it. (*Retires within the ferry-house.*)

TELL. Blow, blow, wild Fohn, apostle of elder winds,
Whose dreaded wanderings have taught our wills
To battle with thine elements!
With thy tumultuous tread, displace the waves,
And, if thou wilt, engulf the hills with them!

They fear thee not nor we! Thy sternest charge
Upon the rocky slopes, loosens the mountain tongues!
The pine wolds wassail in a wilder mood
And human hearts, that love the fohn's swift chase
Exult to hear the forest's brave carouse!
Blow, blow, wild Fohn, I have no fear of thee!

(*Enter Franz.*)

FRANZ. What, Tell, you have no fear of the fohn?
O man, but you're a boaster. (*Sings in his monotone.*)

The tumbling fohn wallops the shore
Of the weird Waldstätten sea,
But here's the man to row you o'er
To Schwytz's side,—maybe!

O! I'll not boast, man, for I fear it some!
I'll tell thee this: it makes me laugh and shout,
This old wind does!

TELL. It gives me feelings strange.

FRANZ. Why man, look there! (*Pointing.*) Who's coming down the road?
Who's that?

TELL. I do not know who it can be.

FRANZ. Ah, see him lift and drop his legs! O! that's
A fine pace for this gusty weather, sure!
He almost rivals the old fohn itself!

TELL. I know him now. It's Conrad Baumgarten.
He lives in Altzellen, near the Wallenstock.

FRANZ. Methinks he's leaving town and leaving fast.

(*Enter Baumgarten, excited and out of breath.*)

BAUM. Quick,—quick, the boat, Franz!
FRANZ. What! my boat? And why?
TELL. What is the trouble, man?
BAUM. (*Going to the ferry-house.*) The boat, the boat!
O quick, they're coming; the Wolfshot's men. I killed
The castle governor.
FRANZ. Killed the Wolfshot?
TELL. Ah, why did you do that?
BAUM. He insulted
My wife.
TELL. The villain.
BAUM. He commanded her to come
And bathe with him; used force; then she contrived
To call me from the field. I had my axe.
I ran, I felled him with one blow. O now
He bathes in blood!
TELL. Thou art justified.
BAUM. But quick!
His men will follow where I fled. Come, Franz,
The storm affrights me none. Row me across.
There is no time to lose.
FRANZ. What, row you o'er?
There's nought but wind and mist gets o'er the lake
To-day.
BAUM. I must! (*Looks up the road.*) O God, I must, but how?
FRANZ. Wert thou a vulture, wings could scarce transport
Thee thru these currents of maddened airs!

(*Winds and thunder.*)

TELL. We'll fight
And thus protect thee, when they come.
BAUM. O thou
Canst not. They're armed; they're many; mounted too.
O God, lift me on winds and bury me
Within the mists on high! Make me a cloud
For fohns to furrow thru or be my bier,
Wild storm, and bear me hence! O save me, men!
The obdurate powers I pray to, will not help!

(*Runs up and down the bank.*)

Waves hear me! Roar no more; be still; or else
My blood will crimson your white breasts and stain
Your cheeks! Help; help! Nought hears me; neither Heav'n
Nor Earth!
TELL. Be not so wild; we'll find a way.
BAUM. (*Stamping his feet; moving to and fro in despair.*)
O hideous world! Vile waves! Ye pitiless winds!
Dumb Heav'n, repulse my ragged accents, if thou wilt,
But heed my plea! The cadence of Despair
Doth always stammer. Help me; help. O help!
TELL. What can be done?
FRANZ. Hide in the ferry-house.
BAUM. No, no.
FRANZ. Then row thyself across.
BAUM. I can't
Alone.
FRANZ. What then? The maddened whirlpools spin;

Their eddying arms grasp wildly for their prey;
The hungry fohn, like some blood-thirsty bird
Beats with its frenzied wings and digs its beak
Into the flesh of shores and hills.

(*Winds blow fiercely; waves dash; thunders roar.*)

Such blasts
Would drive the very mountains on like waves!

BAUM. Those roars
Confederate themselves with winds and waves
To drive me back and help the Wolfshot's men!
The fohn is their accomplice; raging floods
The allies of the tyrant's sin!
Accursed union! Now I'm in despair!

(*Rushes about; looks up the road.*)

See, see; they come! A mile to cover yet!
Their steeds' wild gallop's like the billow's leap!
O God, how all things imitate the fohn!
Then let my gestures do the pantomine,
And in a tragic mimicry, my rage
Play suppliant on this wave-pelted shore!
O thou unyielding monarch of the lake,
I pray to thee; thou'rt master now.

TELL. Nay, nay;
God's master yet.

BAUM. He does not hear.

TELL. Is't so?
I'll help thee, then.

BAUM. Brave man!

FRANZ. Thou art brave, Tell,
But think,—thy family.

TELL. Friend Franz, my will
Is fixed. I'll go.

BAUM. God glimmers in the mist!
TELL. The soul is not a soul that folds its wings
Before these gothic waters,—druid waves.
Yea,—they are priests,—performing wond'rous rites.
What tho the fohn raves and the fog enshrouds?
But chants and incense, they; and misty crests,—
Their altars for communing with the Heav'ns—
I also have communed. My friend, thy need;
Ye waves,—your rites resolve my soul. Inspired
With grandeur by this grander scene, my deeds
Must match my spir't. Come then, be quick. Now Franz,
Your boat! We'll cross this angry flood and test
The tempest with our trust in God.
FRANZ. You shame me, Tell.
I could not do it, tho. The boat's in there.
(*Points to the ferry-house.*)
TELL. (*Moving to the right.*)
Say to my wife that Tell begins his quest;
His service to his land,—all will be well.
BAUM. (*Kneeling before Tell.*)
Thy hand aims with a skilful poise; thy heart
Aims with a noble zest. Gracious deliverer,
Whose soul affronts the fohn, I am thy slave.
TELL. (*Disappearing in the boat-house.*)
Come; follow me.
BAUM. (*Disappearing too.*) I'll follow thee.
FRANZ. They're gone!
O God, watch over them.
(*Winds blow; lightning, thunder.*)
O what a brawl.
The elements are having a carouse.
(*Looking to the extreme right.*)

Now, they are off! Look how the boat doth bound!
But see Tell's mighty arms! O, e'en the waves
Shrink from the plunging helm. Old boat,
I've often rowed the pilgrim o'er in thee,
But now thou hast thy holiest burden yet!
Grant it safe pilgrimage, O God. Methinks
It strays far from the haunts of Providence
Unless this lake, when e'en the fohn is loose,
Be sanctuary for the refugee. (*Silence a moment.*)
Where are they now? I see them not. Ah, doth
The waves retort Tell's agile thrust and swamp
My boat? No, no; it rises, there it is.

(*Several horsemen dash in at the left. They dismount.*)

1ST MAN. Ferryman, where's Baumgarten gone?

(*Franz does not hear.*)

FRANZ. Now look—
The tugging winds clutch at his blouse; the waves
Gnaw ravenously at the prow and yet
They're safe.

2D MAN. Who are you talking to? Turn round!

1ST MAN. (*Clutching Franz.*) Where is Baumgarten, Franz?

FRANZ. Ah, you are here?

3D MAN. Yes; we are here. Where is that murderer?

FRANZ. That what?

1ST MAN. That murderer, Baumgarten.

FRANZ. See, sirs; there, yonder. On the lake with Tell.
He has escaped you all.

1ST MAN. (*Looking over the lake.*) Why, there he is!

2D MAN. Yes, yes; the two of them. Gessler shall hear
Of this.

3D MAN. Curse that man Tell.

1ST MAN. (*To Franz.*) Is that your boat?

FRANZ. It is, and this my word to those therein.

(*Shouting over the lake.*)

Climb o'er the tumbling ridges of the foam;
Be to the thunder deaf; to raging winds, a rock;
Unto the surge, a shaft shot from a bow,
And from the jaws of ponderous waves
Make safely out and reach to Schwytz's shore!

1ST MAN. Stop, stop! Enough of that. You'll suffer too.

(*Hits Franz violently with the broad of his sword.*)

FRANZ. (*Crouching down.*) O, sir, be merciful!

2D MAN. Well, now there are
Two refugees for that new pris'n in Uri.

1ST MAN. Let us return; we can do nothing more.

(*They mount their horses and ride off.*)

ACT II

In the village of Steinen, in Schwytz. Somewhat to the left of the scene and on the far side of a broad road that passes north and south, stands the commodious dwelling of Werner Stouffacher; in front of which, to the left are linden trees and benches beneath them.

On the right and beyond the road is an open field. Tell and Baumgarten enter from that side.

TELL. O, we are here at last, thank God!
BAUM. I give
My thanks to thee, as well as unto God.
TELL. Well, we are safe now from those awful winds.
The water's snaring stratagems, the fohn
Incited to enclose us in their coils,
Have not attained their victims, tho the day
Be near St. Simon's own.
BAUM. 'Tis true, but then,
Why should I who did justly, find in Schwytz
A sanctuary from avenger's wrath?
TELL. Thy striking axe must help this stricken land,
But move on quickly now, we do not know
How far our mad pursuers may have come.

(*Stouffacher enters from the house.*)

STOUF. Ho! my good friends, what are you doing here?
TELL. Ah, Werner, quick; we must go in. Conrad
Hath slain the Wolfshot, who,—look, look there;—see!

(*Points to the right down the road.*)

'Tis Landenberg and Gessler and their men,
A quarter of a mile below. Inside!

(*The three rush in the house and close the door. As they do so Arnold Melchthal, driving a yoke of oxen, appears at the right, coming over the field next to the house.*)

ARN. Ho; whoa there! (*Stops them near the center.*) That yoke's gone wrong again.

(*Steps toward them and fixes it, speaking while he does so.*)

Ah, my good beasts, ye make no mutiny
But dig the furrows in the store-house ground
That God may carpet Earth's rich floor with grain.
Ye toil with mountain strength and ye descend
The sloping hills not as the landslide grim
Whose clattering claws contuse the mountain's cheek,
But with mute spir'ts; with stern and easy tread
That doth not shake the hills. O ye good beasts
That help the Earth to smile, your passive souls
Are beautiful;—would I were so content!
But quenchless fire puts visions in my heart
Thus I am scorched and cannot shun the flame;
E'en in the shadowed vale it glares; to it
The blaze of sparkling peaks is passionless,
And Mythen's massy crest creeps much more near
To Heav'n, than my lame-pinioned passions do;—
Flame pinnaces that cannot find their port.

(*Leans across the back of an ox.*)

O let me rest on thee to gain some peace
By thy contagious silence, so my fires
May flow into thy dull and colder flesh.
And then, thou mute yoke-fellow in my toil,
Thy spir't will filter into me awhile,
So I may sleep without a fire-dream,
That shows me Heav'n and lets me wake on Earth.

(*Silence; clattering hoofs heard at the right. Arnold rises; moves forward, then stops.*)

Now come to rest, ye kings of Alpine fields.

(*Enter at the right on horseback the governors Gessler and Landenberg, followed by several servants on foot. As they appear, they stop and look back over the road they traversed. Another servant runs in a moment later.*)

SERV. There's not a hollow cave where I've not looked.
We must have passed them somewhere, tho.
LAND. O no; we searched too well. We'll go still further on.
GESSLER. The monstrous pride of all these peasants needs
Rebuke. Look at that house! 'Tis fit
For Austria's own. Some petty landaman *
Boasting his peasant riches or descent
Hath thus contrived its quality to shine
Upon his own. I'll yoke his folly yet
To some just punishment. But where is Tell?
He came this way I thought. I'd meet him now
Not as I did alone once on the edge
Of yon precipitous Oberalp.
LAND. He could
Not reach this place ahead of us.
GESSL. They've gone
To other parts. He is a mountain man,
And knows each pass. Curse him. I'll find him yet.
The other one,—Baumgarten,—I do not know.
LAND. Look there;—that's Melchthal,—the proud youth
Whose father has refused to pay his tax,
Five shillings, unto Austria.

(*Arnold prods his oxen on with his stick. Suppresses his anger on hearing what was just said.*)

GESSL. Then seize his oxen for it. We must teach
These peasants what the taxes mean.

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* The chief magistrate in a canton.

LAND. Yes; they will do.
(*To a servant.*) Go; take that pair of fatted beasts and say
That peasants who would till the soil, must hitch
Themselves unto the plough. Now hurry off.

(*The servant walks rapidly to Arnold; the others look on.*)

SERV. In Gessler's name I take these oxen, hind.
Your father has refused his tax, and this
Is how you both must suffer punishment.

(*Seizes the oxen by their horns and pushes them toward the road.*)

ARN. Let be there! What do you mean?
SERV. Taxes, hind;
Which must be paid, if not in silver, then
In oxen flesh. Go draw the plough yourself.
ARN. What, varlet! Seize my oxen? Why! my father
A little in arrears, had offer'd his dues,
But they were not received. Away! away!
Your foul touch, which insults my soul, incites
My wrath. Stand back, you arrant knave, stand back!
LAND. (*From his horse.*) How dare you, Melchthal, spurn my orders there?
Stand back yourself or Sarnen's keep will hold
Another prisoner.
GESSL. Impertinent wretch,
Take better care!
ARN. (*As the servant pushes the oxen away.*) And dare you steal my beasts?
O! would mine anger gave me giant-power,

I'd wring the peacock's neck and pluck his tail! *
Hands off, you castle-scullion! Off, I say!

(*The servant persists in leading the oxen away.*)

What! you will not? Then I have said my last.

(*Raises his stick and brings it down on the servant's hand, breaking a couple of his fingers.*)

Now hold them if you can!

SERV. (*Wringing his hands.*) You dirty hind!
He's broken my hand! Quick, help!

(*Arnold rushes away; going directly to the rear, then turning to the left behind the house.*)

LAND. (*To the other servants.*) Run to him, men!
And then go catch the peasant-churl. Watch him.
Look—there he goes beyond the house.

(*The servants rush after Arnold. Landenberg and Gessler dismount.*)

GESSL. The wretch!
How haughty these poor peasants grow who have
An ox.

LAND. And when I take his ox away
I leave a wolf; unless my men can catch
Him e'er he's gone too far.

GESSL. But this must stop
If each proud hind turns wolf and fills the vales,
Who will be safe?

LAND. We must make captures then.
There's Tell, Baumgarten, Melchthal—three of them.

GESSL. (*Mounting.*) I'll snare the first one somehow tho I lose
The rest.

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* Peacock's feathers were Austrian symbols.

LAND. (*Mounting.*) Tell is a skilful archer, is he not?

GESSL. Yes—so am I, and better too; my shaft
Will prove a yoke to catch him on the run,
And halt his nimble capering, on lake
Or land.

LAND. These hinds consider themselves, it seems,
As princes on their soil. The highland prompts
Too haughty sentiments. Let them annex
Their little cantons to the Austrian Court.

(*The servants reappear; running in.*)

1ST SERV. We could not catch him, Sir. (*Hugs his broken fingers.*)

2D SERV. He fled into
The woods and disappeared so that we lost,
Sir, every trace of him.

LAND. Poor hunters, you;
And he, too, 's slipped away.

3D SERV. We even explored
Some caves out yonder—but with no avail.

GESSL. Let us ride on;—but we shall find him yet.

LAND. My, how the hind could run!

GESSL. Like a post-horse
That's turned toward home.

LAND. I'll catch him, tho.
(*To his servant.*) No peasant can trifle with my power. Go seek
The rascal's father. They have both conspired
Against my rule. Ah, I shall be revenged.
Their wanton haughtiness shall soon be shrunk
And buried in the little furrow there,
Like prickly stubble that it is.

Go; seize his goods and take those oxen too.
Demand of him that he help find his son,
Which if he doth refuse, then pierce his eyes
Thru with thy sword's own plough-share steel,
And from those furrows filled with peasant blood
Will spring obedience and humility.

(*Servants depart at the right. One drives the oxen thither. Stouffacher and his wife come out of their house just as the men disappear, and await the approach of the governor.*)

GESSL. And stalk by stalk we'll tear this stubble out,
Tho it be rooted deep in the staid ways
Of these rebellious people. Let me think.
Ah, now I have a trap. When I return
To Altdorf, on the market place, I'll plant
A pole and on the pole the ducal cap.
Who loves to gaze upon the peaks, may gaze
On it, and as I shall command, bow down
Uncovered, as a mark of homage, sir,
Before that ancient sign of feudal power,
To which the honor's due, just as to me.
Then I shall catch the stiff backs who refuse
Allegiance unto Austria, and treat
The traitors as I please.

LAND. Good, good!

GESSL. As soon
As yon Zwing * Uri's walls grow thick and high,
And when her vaults are strong as mountain caves;
When like a dragon, bleak and black, it stands
Upon the snowy bosom of the hills,—

* Literally: dungeon-Uri. A prison near Altdorf.

Creating dread as mute as are its stones;—
Then I'll be ready and the pole be set.

LAND. The Emperor Albert will reward you well,
For doing this to aid his growing power.
Let us move on, however. Stop! look here!
What's this?

(Margreth, having come in at the right, kneels in front of Gessler's horse, just a little to his left.)

GESSL. *(Looking down.)* More matter from a peasant's lips, I judge.

MARG. My good Lord Governor, from peasant hearts.
My hunter lad's in Küssnacht's prison, Sir.
O free him; mercy, Sir!

GESSL. 'Twas he that stole
Within the castle grounds. Let thieves go free?
Away! I've been delayed too long with knaves.
Confound their skulls.

(They ride on a little nearer the house. Margreth follows.)

MARG. Not his! O mercy, Sir!
He's young, he knew not what he did. Restore
Him now; tear off the dungeon's stony hood,
That wraps his breast and tightens 'round his heart!
He'll do it ne'er again!

GESSL. He'll have no chance.
Up, girl! out of my way!

MARG. O hear me yet
Lord Governor; give me mine all again!
Dark Solitude will feed upon his strength
And with its quietness, enfeeble limbs
That walked the glacier's frozen waves and cleared
The snowy fissure's span. God made him, Sir,

In His sweet dream of Heav'n; gave him to me.
The prison has him now. Its arms cannot caress;
Its breast is hard, and its speech not of love.

GESSL. O how much longer must I hear such talk?

LAND. Let's ride along.

(*Rides a step or two in advance.*)

MARG. Wait, I will sing to thee.

(*Sings.*)

O Summer stay thy waning glow;
Cold are the greenwood shades;
Drive back the creeping Alpine snow
That whitens on the glades!

Sweet with thy gold were flowery meads;
Warm with thy clasp, my heart;
And still thy forest vesper feeds
My soul with saintly art!

But yield, O yield, thy golden prime!
To the Alp, O Winter, go!
My heart,—it needs the mellow clime
And not the sliding snow!

GESSL. You sing well, girl; but move or I shall tramp
You down.

MARG. O please, Sir, pardon him!

GESSL. You little fool!
Do Zurich's minnesingers, visiting us,
Proclaim their revels in yon Küssnacht's walls
That thieves may be released; traitors go free?
Up, girl; away!

(*Moves his horse to one side, to advance. Margreth follows him quickly; kneels in front of it and Gessler stops again.*)

What! you will not!

LAND. Come on!

MARG. Lord Governor, hear me; I was happy once.
Give me mine all again. Thy chastening shafts
May strike me anywhere but in my heart!
Give me some other anguish, Sir, or change
The angle of this shaft. Away, away,
Fierce point! Alas, I cannot turn it off!
Draw out this ravening arrow from my breast
And thrust it here or here. (*Points elsewhere.*) A pointed sheath
Of miseries may run me thru; but, Sir,
Not thru my heart; a fissure there
Gives sorrow no restraint.

GESSL. Hence, girl, begone!

(*Drives his horse on; Margreth leans aside quickly to preserve herself. Gessler and Landenberg move opposite to Stouffacher and his wife. They stop there gazing at the house.*)

LAND. Some Schwytzers must be rich.

GESSL. I think so, too.

(*They continue gazing at the house.*)

GERTRUDE. Shame on you, Lords, to treat a maiden so.

MARG. (*Still kneeling.*)
The sceptre of my song is forfeited;
The vestal pleading of my heart is spurned;
The tender flourish of love's angel wings,—
Too soft to beat in hate-blown airs, hath waned.

(*Arises; runs to Gessler's side.*)

Thou brute, I might have better asked the fohn
To spare the rose or bid the avalanche
To hush its scream and halt, than ask of thee
To lift thy satyr hoof from off my heart,
Or make the innocent free and give him light!
Foul man, I hate thee so! Ah, there is balm
In holding converse with the cliffs and caves;
The frowning mountain welcomes every cry;
But hear,—proud reptile, less than that cold stone
Thy soul is echoless to God's appeal!
Yon Hacken's heart is soft compared to thine,
Which, were it clothed in snow, would freeze the flakes
To ice! (*Bursts into tears.*)

GESSL. Away, away; you arrant wench!

(*Draws his sword and threatens her.*)

I'll draw thy blood with tears, and hazard nought
In proving myself right before the Emperor.

GERT. For shame, my Lord. O, make her lover free.

MARG. Before thee I have ventured all my life.
Before my God, I hazard nought. My risks
Before the king and thee are lost, and thus
The stakes of love are in the dungeon's power,
And thine, Lord Governor.

GESSL. Get back! (*Strikes her back with the broad of his sword.*)

GERT. You brute!

MARG. (*Staggering.*) Help! Ah, the mist before My eyes!

GERT. Here, child, I'll help you—shame on him.

(*Gertrude runs to her aid.*)

MARG. (*Holding her hands on her eyes.*)
'Tis but the white smoke of this avalanche
That overwhelms my heart and clouds my sight.
I feel its chill. (*Falls into Gertrude's arms.*)
GERT. Sweet child, come in with me.
MARG. Good woman, who are you?
GERT. A helper, by God's grace,
To the oppressed.

(*Gertrude leads Margreth into the house.*)

LAND. We've had enough of this.
GESSL. Such little wenches beg wherever they are.
LAND. A good tongue and a bit of madness helps.
GESSL. (*To Stouffacher.*) Whose house is this?
STOUF. (*Bowing.*) The King's, my lord, and yours
And held in fief by me for service to you both.
GESSL. (*To Land.*) Look; see that proverb o'er the window there.
These smug folks, richer than the rest, parade
Their morals in an ostentatious way;
Preaching the paths of their prosperity,
As if Almighty God himself were proud
Of them alone. Ah, how long shall we let
This purse-pride flaunt itself upon
The public road and let these sleek churls build
So finely? See those peasant 'scutcheons, there
Upon those beams!
LAND. Presumptuous heraldry!
GESSL. And I the governor of this land, behold
Such fatted arrogance! The ducal cap
Will soon be my shield and indeed the snare
For these proud, ostentatious people, who

Outbrag their kin, despite the King himself.
Ride on, enough of them!

LAND. Our men are coming, wait.

(*Their servants come in at the right.*)

1ST SERV. (*To Land.*) We did your bidding, Sir. He would not help.
We sent his herds and goods to Sarnen's keep
And ran his eyes thru with a sword.

LAND. Well done.
A lesson for the rest.

2D SERV. He would not help
Us in our search and swore against you, Sir.

3D SERV. He's but a mumbling blind old beggar now.

GESSL. He will come this way soon then, for this house
Feeds all; monks, beggars, pilgrims, traitors, too.

STOUF. My Lord, this house——

GESSL. Hush, not a word.

LAND. Its granary too, should be in Sarnen's pris'n.
Its front, self-satisfied with such fine dress,
Should be in keeping with the pilgrims' weeds
And with the ragged beggar who is fed
In its pretentious walls.

GESSL. (*To the servants.*) Go on ahead.
There're traitors to be found along this road.
Baumgarten, Tell and Melchthal. Damn them all.

(*Servants go out at the left.*)

LAND. They've scooped the larder here no doubt
To help their damned perfidious bodies on.

GESSL. (*To Stouf.*) Have you helped William
Tell to go beyond?
(*Points up the road.*)
STOUF. My Lord, I have not.
GESSL. Then where has he gone?
LAND. Let's search the house.
GESSL. (*Dismounting.*) Yes; call the servants back.
LAND. (*Dismounts; whistles, then waves the servants to return.*)
GESSL. Now, my Lord Stouffacher, open the house,—
The King's and mine;—so that we may go in.
Come, Sir; I take you at your word.
STOUF. What! search my house?
GESSL. No; search the King's. We are
His viceroys here.
GESSL. (*Approaching him.*) Now, vassal, ope my door.
GERT. (*Suddenly appearing and closing the door after her.*)
What is this I hear?
GESSL. We are going to search
This house, so please draw back the door for us.
GERT. What! open my home's door for your vile tread?
You villain governor, away! Tell me,
Sirs, rather to expose my breast for shafts;
To shut mine eyes and let the lance pierce thru!
Up, Werner and defend thine own!
O'er my dead body they may lift the latch
And then lift me within. Shall we submit
To these vile-tongued despoilers of our rights?

STOUF. (*Standing beside her. The servants come in.*)
Good wife, I stand here with thee too, and will
Not suffer any in my house, that come
Against my wish.
GESSL. Do you not know I am
The governor,—the King's own viceroy here,
And thus demand admittance rightfully?
GERT. Away! for thou wilt never enter here!
Wert thou a beggar, foot-sore, tired and lame;
Limping the road along; wert thou a pious monk
Or sacred pilgrim;—wert thou anything
But Gessler, with thy cursed sword and steel,—
Proud peacock mien and insolent speech, thou wouldst
Find welcome here! But as thou'rt he, begone!
Thy cursed venom go with thee! No more
Profane the pilgrim's resting place! Begone,
Foul man or tread me down to death!
GESSL. Good God!
Let's out of this! (*Mounts.*) Thou shrewish brawler, fare thee well!
LAND. (*Mounting.*) Now men, go on once more.

(*Servants go out at the left.*)

GESSL. We'll find the culprits yet,
And bury them within the darkest keep.

(*They ride out at the left. Gertrude and Stouffacher sit down.*)

GERT. The brutes! I watched them standing there so long
I thought it was a dinner that they wished.
But when I heard you cry—: "What! search my house?"

I understood. (*Silence.*)
Why dost thou not reply?
STOUF. Thou dost not understand.
GERT. I do not understand?
Tell me what they have said.
STOUF. Oh, I can not.
GERT. Thou must. I am the sharer of thy life;
I have the country's weal at heart. I know
How envy opes our foreign ruler's eyes
To covet what is ours; how each one thinks
The plaudits of the King will crown his acts,
And our humility will be the yoke
Their deeds tie round our necks. O sufferance
Is shame—a penfold for th'aspiring soul!
Ah, were our spirits less penurious
Of their ancestral valor, 'twould not be!
STOUF. Good Gertrude, thou dost ope my lips. Gessler
Sat on his horse there; looked aroundabout;
Then sneered; then sneered again at this,—our house;
Jeered at those proverbs with his scoffing lips;
And scorned our hard-earned wealth, then turned and said
To Landenberg: "How long shall we allow
These churls to build so well?"
GERT. And what saidst thou?
STOUF. What could I say? My conscience stings me now.
They asked whose house it was. I said: "My Lord,
Your's and the King's, but held in fief by me."
GERT. Oh! oh! Why didst thou say it? Hast thy spir't
No wherewithal to cope with tyrannous men?

Thy dexterous paltering offends my soul!
Why quibble that way? Werner, is thy heart,
So cloistered in the softening ease of wealth
It cannot now rebel? Then shame upon
Our home; our lands; our herds in pasture there!
Shame on our flocks, our all, that thus erode
The steely armor of Stouffacher's soul!

STOUF. Gertrude, I pray forgive my weakness; do!

GERT. Yea, but I curse these riches doing so.
Away with them; we need them not, O God,
Restore the benefits of poverty!
The rocky ledge, without the lowland soil,
Doth mother grass; the moss is bosomed there;
The grim and sunless fissures of the rock
Abates its barrenness enough to yield
The strong and tempest charging pine! O range
The forest; see the vegetation there;
How hardy and robust! The frugal rock
Hath a congenial breast which giveth strength.
Then, Werner, let us court such poverty
If affluence decays thy noble spir't.

STOUF. Gertrude, come here, beneath this linden tree.

(*She follows him thither. Stouffacher sits down; Gertrude stands near him.*)

GERT. O how our grievances increase! You heard
What Gessler said about the ducal cap?

STOUF. Yes, yes.

GERT. He'd shame the Heaven's blue; ensnare
Our souls by such a thing as that!

STOUF. O Gertrude,
'Tis but another Austrian trick.
GERT. A trick?
Nay; 'tis a crime, as others are. Thou know'st
In Altdorf, how the pris'n of Uri grows;
Yea, stone on stone. Methinks the hills will sink
With them; but weights upon our souls are worse
Than cordage round our limbs! The green ravines;
Precipitous defiles, whose depths we've trod,
They are the Alpine keeps;—not dungeons, no!
O shame on us, whose necks have never bent
Under the Hapsburg's yoke that strangles other lands,
To suffer Gessler's keep so near to God's!
Then pray to Him who set these mountains here
To foster liberty, that we, who're giv'n
His precious gift may not yet be deprived
Of eating from the mountain-altar cloth;
Of drinking from the glacier's silver cup;
Of treading free thru these cathedral vales;
Of bowing to the cross alone! O how
My spir't doth leap upon God's terraces!
We are their vergers now; then close their doors
To those who desecrate our homes!
STOUF. Brave wife,
Thou dost inspire me so! But then our homes
Are safe.
GERT. How canst thou say that? Oh, have not
Our very doors been stormed this hour? Dost thou
Not grieve most seriously at that?
STOUF. I do.
GERT. Ah, but it doth not seem so, Werner, dear.
Why e'en the mountain peaks, in part, progenitors

Of our own race and spir't, break down in grief.
Methought that yester's avalanche seemed like
A frozen tear from Mythen's crystal eye,
That coursed his grizzly cheek with thunderous moans.
The airs behind it screamed hysterical,
And brought the Heaven's chiding and displayed
The mountain's wrath; our great protector's scorn
Of such base homage unto Gessler's power.
O it must cease! Arouse our men! Till I
Have seen each grievance well redressed, I have
No peace in soul.

STOUF. O take it not so hard,
Dear wife.

GERT. Speak not like that. Let us retrieve
This sinning 'gainst our precious heritage.
Pollution's progress and the canker's crawl
Proceed alone from manhood's weakened will.
Condone no trespass! Up and guard thy weal!
What is the tyrant's power but apathy
The people of a land so oft display?
Arouse thy sleeping fires! Up, draw thy bow,
And God will quicken all the seed we sow!

STOUF. Good wife, he will, but look—Tell and Baumgarten
Are slipping out the door.

(She turns to see them coming over the threshold; carefully looking to either side, then goes to meet them.)

GERT. Be careful, friends.

TELL. The governors and their men went to the north,
Did they not?

GERT. They did, but wait, do not go.
STOUF. (*Approaching them.*) Good friends, why hurry off? You're not safe yet.
There may be spies about.
TELL. I fear them not.
BAUM. I must see my wife; she will think me dead.
TELL. I too, for Hedwig will be wanting me.
GERT. O stay, we must confer about our wrongs.
TELL. We must go home. God will protect us all.
Good friends, we thank you for your help.
BAUM. God knows
I thank you all and owe you great return.
STOUF. Our house is refuge and is blessed by those
Who have its help.
TELL. Thank you, good friend. Farewell.

(*Tell and Baumgarten proceed cautiously to the left, then pass out.*)

GERT. May God guard them.
STOUF. And Gessler not find them.
GERT. Thou must go o'er to Uri's land to see
The Baron and Furst and all their friends.
We must arouse the people, Werner dear.
STOUF. (*Sitting down again.*)
Ah, Gertrude, dear, thou hast such spir't! Would it
Might do some great deed for our land!
GERT. Our liberty
Will never thrive in idleness; 'twill die.
Deeds will appear if thou wilt rate them high.
STOUF. Thou hast the spirit's power, good wife.
GERT. The power
Of spirit is this, that it can fit itself

To any cause; and fast can it flow thru
Circuitous channels of wrong among our hills,
And fill their cunning burrows with its fire!
Its pilgrim flame, that flares aloft and east
And west, would soon illume each evil shrine
Where tyrants scoff—; at Küssnacht; Sarnen too,
And prison walls be made the incense stones
Wherefrom its clouds and fire would rise to Heaven,—
Out-soaring every peak in speaking praise
To God for freedom o'er our foes.

STOUF. There is
No peril to a spirit like that.

GERT. Peril?
What peril stays the upward leaping flame?
The lance may pierce its sides; a hundred swords
May flash in envy as they plough it thru!
The bow that brings the chamoix tumbling down
Hath not a shaft that stops fires climbing limbs.
Wound proof it blazes as our spirits will
That trust to God on high.

STOUF. Gertrude, thou dost
Instruct me well.

GERT. O Werner dear, create
That spirit if thou hast it not. Be not
So guilty of this quietude of heart.
Gessler hath now insulted you and me,
And doth parade his scoffing visage, too,
Before our neighbors. Mark his vanity;
The peacock-feather cap; the medal of gold
Upon his steel-clad breast to show his rank.
The heart that beats beneath, is not so high.
Ah me, would I could strike some blow.

STOUF. Yes, wife;
E'en children tremble at his power and name.
GERT. Then up and call the Unterwalden men
And those of Uri, suffering just as we.
Were I a man I would not long endure
The Austrian peacock's insolence!
His minions e'en,—but with their master's spite
Have badgered holy palmers. Yesterday,
Two weary pilgrims whom I fed and cheered,
Said, that in Altdorf, they'd been beaten sore
For innocent trespass on the building ground.
STOUF. Oppression is everywhere. The fisher boys
Hide in the caves when Gessler passes by.
How numerous are our enemies, my dear!
GERT. What's that thou says't? O Werner, look at me.
Give me thine hand. Thou knowest thine ancestors
Who wrested from ambitious Austria,
The charters we have read; thou knowest, too,
Th'unhumbled blood that pulsed with righteous fire;
Thou knowest that when my love was in the bud,
Thy spirit's warmth in telling of the frays
Thou had'st been in, uncurled its binding leaves;
And when thou saidst, "Who ever heard of Schwytz
Counting the number of her enemies,"
Ah, then, enkindled by thy flashing eyes,
The tender blossom burst! My heart's spring flood
Like melted avalanches 'whelmed thee o'er
With love, and yet I love thee, but I hear
Thee counting Schwytz's enemies. Arise!
Strength comes to those who fight against their fate!
The fervor of thy pristine blood be thine!

Let not the former decades' fleeting span
Leave in the rear our laggard pulse! Alas,
Shall we fail to foresee that time alone
Can never renovate our gloried past,
Restore our liberties or yield us power?

STOUF. (*Arising.*) O wife, thou hast now stirred my heart indeed.
Unto the Empire only my allegiance goes,
And not to Gessler. What a caitiff tongue
And supple spine I have! Ah, never more
Will't bend its hinges in a servile bow
To arrant overlords! There is a scar
Upon my 'scutcheon now. But dear, my wife,
Pardon my shame, for, I shall council soon
With those in Uri;—the Baron and Walter Furst.
Ah, better 'tis to fight, than thus
To grovel in the tyrant's yoke.

GERT. Thou speakest
Like Stouffacher of old.

STOUF. Where is my stave?
I'll set out now. (*Starts toward the house.*)

GERT. Stop; look! they're coming back.

STOUF. (*Stops and looks to the right.*)
Yes, there they are;—four of them now.

GERT. Why, there's the Baron and Walter Furst with them.

(*Enter at the right the Baron, Furst, Tell and Baumgarten.*)

STOUF. Welcome, good friends. I was about to start
To visit you and have a conference
Upon our country's weal.

BARON. We're here for that.

GERT. Let us sit down beneath the trees.

(They sit down while Gertrude looks up and down the road for spies.)

FURST. Good friends,
We must consider what to do.
GERT. Werner
And I have just conferred, and think that we
Must strike some blow to stop our wrongs.
BARON. Good woman,
I know them all, and Tell hath told us what
Hath just been happening here. But oh,—the worst,—
Good Henri Melchthal, who loves his country so,
Hath been struck blind by Landenberg's command
Because he would not aid the search for Arnold
Who has attacked one of the governor's men.
The blades pierced thru his eyes!
GERT. The fiendish wretch!
Pierced thru his eyes! O let me weep!
My grief doth drive me wild! (*Weeps.*)
STOUF. What devils infect
The peace, the grace, the glory of our land,
And fill our hearts with woe!
GERT. O! would my every word
Were shooting filaments of fire
Whose shafts pierced thru his heart! Men, Henri's blood
Doth stain our hands; nought purifies them now
But resolute spirits that make us free again!
TELL. This sort of freedom is too tedious
And gives a warrant, which our God respects,
For righteous outburst 'gainst our governors.

STOUF. Gessler will lay a trap for thee, friend Tell,
And for us all, so be thou on thy watch.
When disappointed in not finding thee,
He cried out, as we stood there by the door,
"I will, in Altdorf, raise a pole and on it,
Will place the ducal cap; all who are true
To Austria will bow to it."

BAUM. But those
Who're true to Schwitz will not go near to it.

TELL. When I look up to Heaven I bow to God
Not to a ducal cap.

FURST. Let him erect
As many poles as there are peaks around;
Crown each one with a ducal cap; then bid
His criers shout from every hill that we
Must make obeisance to such mid-air slurs
Upon Earth's manhood and the Heaven's law;
Let them outroar the thunders; let them drown
The cascade's song; the avalanche's groan,
God's voice shall still be heard within my soul!

TELL. And will resound thru all the wilderness!

GERT. Ah, now I see the Light! It gleams from Heav'n
To pierce the darkness here, as glaciers glide
Like silver lances down the mountain slant,
Between the dark and brooding forests there.

STOUF. I bow unto a cap? Just there (*Points.*) I bowed
To Gessler—but I'll bow no more.

FURST. How long
Must these things last?

GERT. O friends, as long as we
Allow them to; no longer by a jot.
TELL. 'Tis true, good Gertrude; goad us on. We bear
The yoke and can endure or cast it off.
GERT. Thou speakest well.
STOUF. Have care, friend Tell, that cap
May smother thee.
TELL. Not while I stand upright.
GERT. Who cometh now? Look there.

(*All turn to the right, where two dirty, ragged men have entered. Gertrude goes to meet them.*)

What wanderers are you?
I see the pain upon your faces, men.
Speak, speak!

(*The men move to the front of the house; seem afraid to speak at first, then look at each other.*)

BARON. Good men, speak out.
FURST. Well, are you sick?
1ST MAN. We'd stony burdens on us; leering eyes
And cudgels over us, and then there was
That hell beneath our feet!
GERT. I understand.
You're from Zwing Uri. How did you escape?
FURST. What! are you workmen from the prison there?
2D MAN. O, I could work no more! My arms and back
Can lift up nothing now.
GERT. O ye poor men!
1ST MAN. But old Hans Zweyer fell into the keep.
They would not let us stop to help him out,
So inch by inch between his groans, he crawled;

Got out at last; now's lying limp, most dead.
His own back cannot hold him. O! I see
His wrinkled face; his horny hands;
His spiritless, outworn, world-wearied frame
Shake like the scaffolding we used.

GERT. Stop, stop!
No more! No more! O weep, mine eyes! Drain off
This river of tears! Where are God's sentries gone?
Who will absolve us from those prison stones,—
Those vile and dismal warts upon Earth's flesh
That make the even places rough?

TELL. What Tell
Should do, he'll try. What he can do, will soon
Be done.

(*Stouffacher goes to look up and down the road.*)

BARON. Fair Gertrude, thou dost light my years;
My shortening years. I may not live until
Our freedom comes, but this I know, 'twill come.

FURST. As the resistless glacier polishes
The rough-hewn slopes in sliding down, so we
By our resistless power shall make more smooth
These rugged days thru which we're passing now.

GERT. (*To the workmen.*) Good men, come in and have some bread.

1ST MAN. We must not stay to eat, for they will take us back.
We're going on to Einsiedlin for a while.

2D MAN. We are free laborers.

GERT. Just wait an instant.

(*Goes into the house.*)

BARON. How near completion is the prison?

1st Man. Half done.

Baron. Half done is bad enough; all done is worse.

Furst. And stone by stone it scoffs at freedom here.

(*Gertrude hurries out. Gives each of the workmen a large loaf of bread.*)

Gert. Take them, good men. Pray God to keep you safe.

1st Man. Thank you, good woman.

2d Man. May God prosper thee!

(*They hurry out at the left.*)

Furst. If the black ghosts of Hell took flesh, 'twould be
Within those prison stones to feed upon
The orphan's blood, and grimace fiendishly
When widows moaned before them for their lost.

Gert. That prison and its up-creeping pinnacle
Insults the Alpine azure, friends. O watch
Its growing shadow,—which the noon-day sun
Can never shrink,—enshroud our countrymen.
How long shall that black rival of the hills
Inscribe its dreaded sign upon our snows?

Tell. 'Tis easier to tear the prison down
Than move the ground away.

Baron. Quite true, friend Tell.
Good people, no such scenes as that doth stain
Mine eyes till now. O! may no prison bars
Divide the bond and free. Our stubborn soil
Whose walls are mountains and whose ceiling's Heav'n,
Is prison enough for our hard-working serfs.

STOUF. At Uri's prison-house free men are slaves;
Poor hired hinds whom penury's power deprives
Of just reward that manhood always craves.
FURST. Their overseers usurp our liberty.
GERT. Let not our silence give them wider scope.
A dungeon void of light has less of hope.

(*Arnold peers around the right side of the house.*)

FURST. Arnold! Arnold!
GERT. Is Arnold here? O where?
BARON. Poor youth! His heart will burst.
GERT. Speak carefully!

(*Arnold approaches them.*)

STOUF. Arnold, what have you done?
ARN. What have I done?
I'll tell you all, but first what is that pain;
That tension that I see on every face?
For whose dread deed doth your atoning fear
Print pallor on your cheeks? O not for mine.
I struck the knave who'd steal my ox, that's all.
What makes your scattered gazes speak of dread?

(*He stops; no one answers.*)

Tell me! Why are ye silent thus? O could
I read what thoughts your staring writes upon
The ground, I'd lift those earthen pages up
And hug them to my eyes. Speak, some one, speak!

(*All seem unable to reply. Silence.*)

Your eyes, your cheeks; your hurrying breasts,—
they speak.
But O! your tongues are mute. I understand
The fohn's wild cry; the chamois scream, the whir
Of vulture-wings; mid-mountain stillnesses

Of mid-night skies,—God's peace; the nearby roar
Of thunder just above the peak;—God's wrath;—
I understand the chasm's silence too,—
Th' expectancy, the ravenous mountain maw
Has of its prey;—I know each sound,
Each stillness there; yea every Alpine mood.
I love and understand them all,—but this,
This silence doth confound my soul.

(*Gertrude weeps.*)

But hark!
'Tis brok'n by tears. I'll listen to their speech.

(*As Arnold ceases, a mumbling voice is heard from the right. It becomes louder, then Henri Melchthal, wounded, blind, and dishevelled, stumbles in, knocking on the ground with his cane to find the way. All, looking toward him, are so horrified, they cannot speak or act. Henri moves slowly toward them; the Baron shakes with emotion and Gertrude weeps.*)

Henri. (*Knocking on the ground with his cane.*)
Doth no one hear? (*Silence.*) They've taken my
Alps away,
And this new world is not so beautiful.
Doth no one hear?

Arn. Thou poor and wretched man!
What dreadful breach within the stillness, thou
Dost make. O Time, send us that silence back!
I will not question it.

Henri. Who speaks to me? (*Silence.*)
Thou white-haired Alp, O pity my grey head!
Thy silver locks are sometimes plucked; snow drifts
Oft fall from out thy crown, yet thou art never bald,
Nor old nor eyeless nor dishevelled thus.
O see these dead, drear cavities of mine,
Where once the whole world gleamed;—where once,—

But nevermore! O, nevermore! Stand still, O Earth,
I totter on thy breast. Thou grey-beard Alp,—
None knows me now,—companion me to Heav'n
Upon thy slopes, for Heaven alone is left.
The narrow steel that pierced my little eyes
Hath pried the world away. The blessed Light
Whereby my gaze oft climbed unto the stars
Is banished too! Doth no one hear me now?

ARN. (*Going close to him.*) O! art thou my own father, mangled thus?
My father blinded! O what brute's done this?
And God Almighty, art thou blinded too?
My precious father—it is Arnold speaks.
O let me be thine eyes and lead thee on!

(*Takes his arm; the others arise and approach them.*)

Who's done this bloody and this cruel deed?

HENRI. 'Twas Landenberg's wild men. He could not find
Thee,—thus he is avenged on me.

ARN. (*Letting go his arm; Gertrude leads him.*) Oh, oh!
Lord God forgive my craven heart! Forgive
My coward flight! Turn back, ye feverish tears,
And burn away the sin within my flesh!
Far better 'twere that he had pierced my heart
Than that thy gruesome sockets sear and scourge
And agonize my soul.

HENRI. Dear son, have peace.
Who holds me now? Who's here and where am I?

GERT. Thou art in Steinen, Henri; Gertrude, I,
Who holds thee and around thee stand thy friends,

The Baron, Furst, William Tell, Baumgarten, too,
And my own husband, Werner.

HENRI. My friends
At last. O let me touch each one! (*Stretches out his hand and touches the Baron.*) Who's this?

BARON. 'Tis Attinghausen's lord, friend Henri.

HENRI. (*Groping about.*) And this?

TELL. 'Tis William Tell.

HENRI. (*Touching another.*) And who art thou?

BAUM. Baumgarten.

HENRI. (*Touching another.*) And thou?

STOUF. Werner Stouffacher.

HENRI. Where's Walter Furst?

FURST. Here. (*Takes his hand.*)

HENRI. Now where is the Mythenstein? The lake?
Where are my Alps?

GERT. (*Turning him about.*) Around you. There's the lake
Off yonder and the Mythen, too.

HENRI. Thank God,
My country's here; my friends too and my son.
They took all else, my goods, my oxen, all,—
But this old staff and when I plant it down,
The Earth too, slips away. The old world shuns
The blind and poor. Time's footsteps slacken in the dark.
O what a thousand hours within the last!
Which is the darker now—my heart or eyes?

GERT. We'll light thy heart and soothe thy wounded eyes.

STOUF. (*Embracing him.*) 'Tis Stouffacher who
touches thee; here's home.
Come in my house; and there be at thine ease.
GERT. And we shall dress thy wounds.
ARN. My father, let
Me soothe them too! Forgive my awful sin.
O! I shall weep a warm cascade of tears
Upon those gruesome eyes,—twin graves of light
And joy! O what a coward wretch was I,
To strike, then braze my flinty heart the more
With running off!
O may the golden shafts of yonder sun;
The blessed warmth of all its amber beams
Assemble now in mellowing conclave round
Thy flesh, to soothe its dreadful wounds!
HENRI. My son,
Thou art forgiven. Have peace; 'twill help me bear
The pain.
GERT. (*Leading him.*) Come with me now. We
will go in.
HENRI. Lead on. (*They enter the house.*)
ARN. My God, how can I stay my grief?
Think friends,—the last light that he saw,—the
steel's
Cold gleam, as't ran him thru. For him the Heav'n
Is starless now; Earth mountainless and black.
He'll hear the freshet's roar; the cascade's fall,
That strikes its silver wand upon the rocks
To conjure music forth,—but see them not.
FURST. The mountain's power is wasted on his
eyes.
ARN. It gives me inspiration to avenge
His grief.

BAUM. I'll help thee, Arnold. I have struck
The Wolfshot dead, and thus avenged his deed
Against my wife.
ARN. Well done! Schwitz is arising, men!
TELL. Schwitz should have done't before.
BARON. 'Tis true; I see it now.
ARN. On me, let fall the fires excluded thus
From his poor, blasted eyes! O may I find
Those homeless beams,—from stars, from mountains' flowers,
Whose olden revels in his eyes gave joy.
They'll kindle beacons in my soul and burn
And purge me clean, then help me to revenge
The wrong,—which will be done, if't takes until
The mountains turn to moors; 'till vampire vales,
That lure the glaciers down,—enticing rocks
From every crest,—have filled their cavities,
And avalanches fall no more.
BARON. Soft, soft,
Good youth, be temperate.
ARN. I will not sleep
Lest some one find me unaware,—in dreams,
Not deeds. I will not palter; nay, not I.
God takes my oath. I yield my will to His.
And thus affect acceptance at his throne.
The blessed bond is sealed. O! I shall plough
This land with fire and angels will direct
The flaming share to every Schwitzer's heart!
TELL. Friend Arnold, I can understand, and were
The precious light of Heaven and Earth, exiled
By brutish steel from my own father's eyes,
I'd send an arrow thru the murderer's heart.

ARN. Then, Vengeance, grace my spir't awhile! Lend me
Thy terrible art without its stain, and God,
Inspire with fire's speed my plodding limbs
To climb about our hills with Freedom's word!
With thrice the swiftness of the rising mist
Shall I ascend the slopes, and down them rush
With Alpine ardor, speeding faster far
Than e'en the devil's clattering cavalry *
That oft stampedes from mountain peaks!
BARON. Stop, stop!
Good youth, let not thy fire consume thy strength.
Remember that the frigid glacier, slow.
And drowsy, rives the chasms' jaws at last.
ARN. Yes, yes, good Baron, but watch the lightning leap
From the ice lidded eyes of every crest.
O may I be so mated with its fire
That its swift yoke rest light, nor drag, 'till all
Are free! And if excess of zeal be blest
With restoration of light unto his eyes,
I would erode the hills with pilgrimage;
Wear out my feet, but sanctify my quest.
O! I have dreamed,—dreamed when I ploughed, perhaps,—
That I could break the Austrian yoke. Ye fires,
Flame up again! Inspire me to the deed!
BARON. Well, noble youth, go on thy way. Thy zeal
Will bear good fruit.
TELL. Who labor well, rest well.

* A landslide.

BARON. True, true. God knows we need thee.
Speed thee fast.
This saddening cluster of our woes, compels
Revolt. Arouse our people to the cause.
Relate to them the Hapsburg's purchases
Of old seignorial rights in villages.
Tell them King Albert strives to multiply
His powers, by seizure of our canton lands.
O, in Einsiedlin's abbey, in St. Gall's,
The Austrian peacock spreads his wings. Look round;
North, South, East, West, see how the Hapsburg hopes
To isolate the Schwitz, surrounding us
With nets of conquered lands. Ticinis' mountain chain
Is less a barrier than their lances are.
Awake the people then, and bid them stand
Beside the Empire faithfully; bid all
Defend their homes; their sacred customs, too,
And tell our shepherds to give o'er their feasts
Awhile; our herdsmen, that our land's distressed.
And those who'll sigh the least will sin the most.
Would I again could lead them with my sword,
My shield, and helmet;—still unstained! Those mute
And sacred relics bear no shame for they
Have never paid the tribute—idleness,
To any foe—my kin will use them now.
But God, Thou help us too! Be ever near!
Ye mountains, be the bulwarks of our rights;
Ye streams, well mothered on their hilly breasts,
Entwine your liquid arms about our vales

To wrest them from our foes and ye pine woods,
Scowl with your black brows on our enemies;
Ye crags, make sharp your ledges for a charge;
Lift up your stony halberds, O ye peaks,
And blessed Schwitz, inspire our spir'ts to be
Unyielding as the Jungfrau's frozen armor is!

(*Sinks exhausted to his seat.*)

FURST. O from these mountain heights we'll plead with Heav'n,
And hear its heralds ring from heart to heart
As wandering echoes step from cliff to cliff.

ARN. I'll change the echoes of those granite walls!
Each chasm's song, each gorge's ominous roar,
Shall reënforce the voice rouses Schwitz!
And yonder cheeks of rocky vales that nurse
The dying blasts of herders' horns or bells,
Shall now take new impress from stranger sounds;
Yea, every avalanche that throws its white
And frozen shroud upon the summer's dead,
Shall lure its sequent winds to other songs.

STOUF. Good youth, as thou dost run the cantons thru
To rouse the people 'gainst our foes, may God
Endow thy spir't with pungent words.

TELL. And not the inarticulate frenzy of the fohn.

ARN. The glowing passion of my heated heart
Consumes my patience; scorns delay. I seem
To stand where Rigi's spectres rise. The mist
Ascends with noiseless feet; my shadow there,
In giant's form, is cast upon its wall.

As such a triple increase, be my deeds.
O! thrice more powerful than words can be,
For Vengeance's sake, for ours, for God's.

(Stands wrapped a moment in his own emotion.)

TELL. Ah, now the better arrow's in the bow.
God is impatient with our words.

BARON. (*To Arnold.*) Let not
Emotion's embers pile about thy limbs.
For, gathering there, they'd block thy pilgrim path,
Where mountain cliffs would fail.

STOUF. Go on, good youth,
Thou hast no niggard spirit; that is well.

(Gertrude re-appears.)

ARN. Is father resting well?

STOUF. And hast thou done
All that thou canst for him?

GERT. I have.
He's soothed by all our ministrations now.
The light of love-craft touched his heart,
And in default of eyes, he sees with it.
Henceforth he'll need but what his heart can feel.

ARN. I wish to see him once again, for soon
My pilgrimage begins. (*Goes into the house.*)

GERT. My friends, I too, must heed what my heart feels.
Crime after crime piles high. Why halt so much?
O let the Landsgemeine * act. Why should
These tyrants prolong their reign by every art
Their arrogance and endless hate contrives?
O ye who know that pillage hath her price;
And that a contrite heart cannot suffice;

---

* The cantonal diet.

That meekness mars the reign of righteous war,
Where is your martial might? Your valorous hope?
Sons of a sturdy stock, the great of yore,
With Heaven's help, regain your liberty!

BARON. Thou dost almost renew my youth!

FURST. I'll help
Thee as I can.

(*Arnold returns.*)

STOUF. And I. My house and wealth
Shall be an aid to all.

ARN. My strength is pledged.
And Unterwalden's men will rally too.

FURST. I'll rouse the Bull of Uri.

STOUF. I'll thru Schwytz,
And listen to the people's voice and heed
All their complaints.

FURST. Since thou hast many friends
Thou canst help on the cause.

GERT. The noble lords
Of Schwinsberg, Seedorf, Utzingen and others
Will sympathize.

BARON. Quite true, altho their wrongs
Are not so great as ours, yet they are jeered
By Austrian lords and called the peasant guild
Because they love the people so.

FURST. Advise
Us, Baron; we are agreed to act. What do
You now suggest to us?

BARON. That we swear here
To form a bund;* then thru the several lands
Relate our wrongs and our designs. Admit

* A union.

Whom we can trust; prepare their hearts. Bid each
Confederate to work and keep the faith.

FURST. But we must meet? Where shall we do't?

STOUF. We must
Elude the spies, who're everywhere just now.

BARON. Meet at the Rütli; south of Seelisberg;
Upon the Urner See's west shore. The trees
Have been uprooted for a clearing there.

FURST. We'll do so. Let each man bring nine or ten
Companions, and we will plan our attack.

STOUF. Good, good! The lake and mountain roads lead there.

FURST. What means thy silence, Tell?

TELL. Just what your words
Intend.

FURST. Well said. Baumgarten, what means yours?

BAUM. The same.

FURST. Thou art with us then.

BAUM. I am.

TELL. Friends, I must go. I've tarried too long. My wife
Will think me dead. Come, Conrad; off with me.

(*They arise.*)

I'll do thy bidding, Baron. William Tell
Will not be wanting when there's need of him.

(*They go out at the right.*)

FURST. Now let us swear. Join hands.

STOUF. Yes; each one swear.

(*Arnold, Furst and Stouffacher grasp each other's hands; hold them while the Baron speaks.*)

BARON. Like that let our three cantons stand!
O cherish ye each other as ye cherish
Your liberty,—then love will always burn
Like vestal fires round which traditions move,
And will impel in every man, concern
At least for something of his brother's weal.
Weld firmly your embrace! Knit heart with heart;
Cling like the glacier's woven waves! Change not.
Ours is a timeless contract with our God
Which, even when our mountain homestead's free,
Must be inviolate out of gratitude.

ACT III

On a grassy plateau called the Rütli, along the west shore of the Bay of Uri, between Seelisberg and Sonnenberg.

In the background across the lake can be seen, beginning at the right, Great Mythen, Little Mythen; the Mountains of Schwytz, various precipitous cliffs, frowning over the edge of the Lake, and the town of Brunnen.

Time: near to midnight. The half moon shines near the zenith. The snows and glaciers sparkle.

Arnold, Heinrich Kass, Baumgarten, Staiger and six peasants enter by a pass at the right. Each carries a weapon.

KASS. Hail, Sacred Rütli, mute Confederate!
Once more bear our conspiring tread upon
Thy clearing, open to the Heav'n alone!

ARN. What! no one here?

KASS. We are the first.
BAUM. Again
Old Unterwalden's first upon the ground.
KASS. 'Tis our last gathering here.
ARN. O friends, since I
Have been upon my pilgrimage, I've missed
The former meetings in this sacred place.
BAUM. (*Taking a peasant by the arm.*) Here's one who's not been here before.
PEAS. That's true. I wished to come. Until to-night
I could not get my lord's permission to.
ARN. Who is your lord?
PEAS. The Lord of Schwinsperg, Sir.
BAUM. He's with us. All is well.
KASS. 'Tis cold to-night.
Go, get some wood and make a fire.

(*Three peasants go to do so. Arnold goes to the edge of the lake.*)

BAUM. Here is
Another new man. (*To the peasant.*) Why did you not come
For our last gathering?
PEAS. Believe me, Sir,
Good Arnold Melchthal let me in the bund,
But all my herds were still upon the heights.
I had to bring them down; prepare my stores
For winter and then harvest all my fruits.
ARN. (*Returning.*) The moon's pure silver will be tarnished soon.
'Twill rain by'n bye; I felt the crevice air.
Warm currents are wand'ring forth upon the lake

From its black hollowness.

KASS. It will not come
For some time yet.

ARN. The rest are slow. Thou'rt sure
They knew the night?

(Peasants bring in wood and light a fire.)

KASS. Yes. They will be here soon.

ARN. How very patient seem the mountains now.

KASS. Look, what's that flat thing in the moonlight there?

ARN. A boat! They're coming, but it looks so flat
As if 'twere Saint Beatus sailing o'er
Upon his cloak, to drive some dragon off.

BAUM. It is our men.

ARN. But hark, who's at the back.
Quick, see! And bid them give the word.

BAUM. *(Running to the right.)*
'Tis Uri's men;—the Baron and the rest.

(Stouffacher, Hans Heuber, Hans Gross, Zweyer, Hum, Peter Moohr and four peasants, all carrying arms, climb up on the Rütli from the lake side.)

ARN. And here are Schwytz's too.

STOUF. We're here at last.

ARN. Quick, Werner! is my father well and doth
He rest in peace?

STOUF. He's better now and dwells
With us.

ARN. Thanks be to God! I prayed for him.

STOUF. My wife,—praise God for her,—wished she could come.

She bade me speak of her great faith in us
And give her God-speed in our work.
KASS. Wives give
Cool-headed advice. They seem to know what God
Is going to do.

(Enter at the right the Baron, Furst, Hans Ludwig, Jacob Lusser, Johann Furst, Klegter, a priest; Steffan and Uli, the shepherds, and five peasants.)

STOUF. Baron, welcome; welcome all!
ARN. My friends,
I see you once again. Mine eyes have yearned
So oft for your familiar forms. O, when
I tramped the firn near Uri-Rothstock's crest
And heard our hunter songs, my heart forgot
Its vengeance and my eyes their steely glance.
My salt tears, streaming, thawed the snows, and when
In sterile solitudes, the waning sun
Spread out a crimson blanket o'er the wild,
Methought it was the Alp's white face suffused
With blood,—shamed at my saddening quest.
FURST. Didst thou find anyone who wished us ill?
ARN. The minions of the tyrant; no one else.
LUDWIG. None like old Peter Gerig then, who walks
His floors, fat, smug, content, afraid to rise.
ARN. The listless fool! His very breath exhales
The languor of a weakened mind! He deems
Ill-bred the rise of wrath, does he,—and counts
It low to mingle in our bund? Then shame
Suffuse his face and let the Alps stay white!
KASS. Can human words or words of gods inspire
Such half-a-man to righteous anger's fire?

BARON. Peace, peace! The brother's love, a despot oft
Can learn and it may soothe a tyrant's zeal.
By it we'll win old neighbor Gerig yet.
ARN. Ah yes, but may his blood flow faster now!
KASS. And may his spirit soar beyond the realm
Of sordid selfishness. Let him bear arms
As we.
ARN. 'Tis vain to speak of Gerig, Kass.
Because brute Gessler dined with him and bowed
Before his house, but frowned with blazing eyes
Upon the rest, he takes no part with us
And smiles with mocking lips upon our work.
BAUM. Teems not his breast with anger at the scene
Of wrongs heaped on us all?
FURST. Friends, it does not.
ARN. Hath he no fiery spirit that defies
The rule of rapine in our land?
FURST. None, none.
BARON. Arnold, take my advice; let him alone.
ARN. I cannot do so, for he doth despise
The Spartan hand and heart. Let's search him out;
Confront contemptuous renegades with force.
KASS. Alas, 'twill be but vain to speak to him
Of stalwart men and deeds. It's true: effete
Of human kind despise the breeds of might
Who dare to do! But then, can valor thrive
With weakness? Ah, friends, where and when?
ARN. Send messages to him. What right have we
To pardon or acquit him of his part?
BARON. Friend Arnold, let him be. We've come to-night

To plan for more; see what's already done.
KASS. But there are others holding back; Schmidt, Berg,
Men who have wealth.
ARN. Alas, if pleasure wrecks
Our hands for war; prosperity
Effeminate our souls, when Schwitz is thus
Maltreated by its ruthless governors;
Who shall arise with might and rescue it?
BARON. Soft, soft, good Arnold. We are here. With God
And these strong men; with others who are pledged
We'll storm each fortress in the land. (*To Kass.*) Why will
Friend Schmidt not come? Now tell us what he said.
KASS. His feigning heart put false words on his tongue.
ARN. His captious cavil is a crime concealed.
We know not yet what we can do. We need
All we can find. O let those renegades,
Those bold, base hypocrites, take care, for God's
Dread sabre shall not strike in vain! Their souls
Shall sear with shame and vile dishonor's curse!
Their loathsome apathy; their fear to strike;
Their unimpassioned spirits,—powerless flames,—
Would risk the stigma of this tyranny
And rest in wanton ease while we take arms!
BARON. But there are very few. Let them alone.
KASS. What if there're only six. There should be none!
How dear the price of strength and valor is
To them; mark ye their wonted tendencies
To rest; to spurn the souls that fight, whilst we

Put on the night's black armor and creep forth;
Avoiding spies and risking death! The stars;—
The eyelets in the sable casques that dome,
Like airy helmets o'er our heads;
Our castle citadel;—the clearing here;
Our walls,—the forests vulnerable air!

KLEG. God is our ally even in this place.
We need not stone walls, nor the traitors now.
Consider them no more.

BAUM. One of Schmidt's men
Had joined the bund, but he was forced to quit.

BARON. Hush, hush. Men, form a semi-circle round
The fire, while we hold our last diet here,
And make our final plans.

(*All sit down as directed; the Baron and the men of Uri in the middle; Schwytz's to the right; Unterwalden's to the left.*)

BARON. I'll sink our sword-hilts
Within the ground; and point their shafts to Heaven.

(*Plants three swords upright in the ground before them.*)

ARN. Three-headed God of war,—Earth grasps thee now,
But doth not wield thy blades; soon other hands
Will thrust thy points elsewhere,—and not to Heaven.

BARON. (*Standing in the center.*)
Nay, nay! We'll shed no blood and kill no man.
Each castle, men, must fall by strategy;
The tyrants be driven forth for lack of homes.
And since we hold our diet here without
Processions and the bugle's blast, and tho
None bear aloft the Bull of Uri's horns;
Or beadles in their black and yellow garbs

Precede our furtive gathering here; tho all
Who may attend are not at hand, and tho
We have not every legal form and book,
Yet we do pledge ourselves; our lands, our lives,
Unto our cause, for in the tyrant's scoffs,
And in his crimes; the travail of our souls;—
In all we find the justifying cause.

KLEG. 'Tis true. God's blessing's on a broken law
Thus violated in the general weal.

STOUF. The Baron be our landaman! Are all
Agreed? Hold up your hands if so.

(*All do so.*)

Well done!
Proceed, good Baron. Ho! peasants, get more wood;
The fire is burning low.

(*Two peasants do so. To the others talking.*)

Hush, men; be still.

BARON. (*Standing before them.*)
This night is not for slumber, nor the dark
For quietness and fear. This night, those stars;
These biting airs, persuade our souls.
The sable coverings of Earth illume
Our sleepless spir'ts. Sweet night, thy silent gloom
Is richest pasturage for souls like ours!
'Tis dark without,—but O, within our hearts
A something shines like Jungfrau's virgin snows!
The darkness is not dumb, tho it be mute,
And may it not turn to light until we've gleaned
Each vestige of its inspiration here!

KLEG. (*Rising.*) The day and night are both within God's hand,

From whose imperial throne our freedom comes.

BARON. His thrones are many. See! they gird us round!

The mountains quell my fears and give me hope!
I pray to God that they may never sink
Or draw their shadows in, or ever be
Interred within the vales! Those blessed peaks,—
They are the vanguards of our rise to Heaven.

STOUF. (*Arising.*) As we came o'er the lake, a star perched o'er
The Uri-Rothstock's crest,—God's signal fire
To light the ladder-rounds of Hope.

ARN. (*Stepping to the middle.*) O friends,
As I sped thru the land to tell our woes;
Inspire the people to revolt, I saw
At Engleberg,—sweet hill of Angels,—clouds
Aglow like virgin visitants from Heav'n,
Fold in their billowy wings; pile up like snows,
And o'er the Abbey, at the Titlis' foot,
Anchor their vestal prows in midmost airs.
It was a sign from God. I did not stop.
No wind-blown pilgrim, I; no cloud, both grand,
Serene and pure, but this: a liege to dreams
That drove me forth; to vengeance and to signs
Such as we see about; in homage bound
To Freedom's mighty Lord who lured me on;
Girt me with visions in the vales and showed
Me God from every mountain top.

BARON. Speak on!

STOUF. Tell us the rest.

FURST. Are all the people with us?

ARN. Would ye had trod those paths; had seen those signs!

I followed every valley first. In them
My words sound louder than on mountain tops.
Then thru a hundred narrow gaps along
The east flank of the Oberalp, wherein
I saw a three-horned chamois;—it was lost,
But piped its whistle 'mongst the rocks for aid
As I proclaimed my song to hunters there.
I climbed by glacier grooves up rocky walls;
I went where, e'en in summer's heat, ice-wells
Abide like sunken fortresses, within
Whose battlements the sun-shafts cannot pierce.
To all retreating from the hills, I told
Our wrongs; they told me theirs. I saw their eyes
Change into fire; I heard their oaths and marked
The sufferance on many a face. O friends
They will not palter now. To strangers ev'n
Who asked their way, and whom, by ancient law
I was obliged to guide, I told our wrongs.
Surennen's pass, and Storegg's too, confined
My anxious steps. O many cottagers,
Beside whose stone slab fires I warmed my limbs,
Turned votaries of war; bade me God-speed:
Pledged help to rid us of our woes. God knows
I played the spendthrift of my zeal, and thrice
I nearly slipped in a concealed crevasse!

BARON. Thank Heaven, thou'rt safe.

FURST. But have more care henceforth.

ARN. Then I repaired to solitude upon
An icy-minaret, reflecting Heaven's stars,
And wished to be alone; at peace, but O,
The palaced magnitude of beauty there;
Each pinnacle, an angel head that yearned
For Heav'n, compelled an anxious prayer!

I streamed with tears; I know not why; I sang;
I cried aloud in Heaven's ears, and lo,
The surge of sorrow from beneath, rose up
That Alpine spire, then ebbed! I floated down
With it and pilgrimmed to Einsiedlin's shrine,
Where once angelic minstrelsy was heard
From Heav'n. I hoped 'twould sound again.
I heard the knocking on my soul instead,
Because my penance had not armored it.
I drank the waters where our Saviour drank;
Upon my knees, prostrate and humble there,
I prayed before the burning lamp and prayed
Before each shrine that led away. O now my soul
Is mailed in pardon's steel! Now I can die!
Up! Up! good men; we are not drowsy mists
That saunter toward the Heavens! Stand ye firm
As jagged peaks that stab the rushing winds,
And all the world will stare to see exhumed
From Slumber's scabbard, Freedom's sword again!

(*Many of the hearers arise in great excitement.*)

BARON. Peace! peace! Sit down. We storm no castles yet!

(*They seat themselves. To Arnold.*)

Who labor well, rest well, and thou, good youth
Whom we now praise and thank, sit down in peace,
For Retribution cannot lose its grasp,
Nor Compensation fail to follow law,
And if our efforts are not rent in twain,
The tyrant's castles soon will be.

ARN. (*Stopping suddenly on moving to his seat.*)
Look, look!

(Points out on the lake, where there is a rainbow.)

Another sign! Ah, God is with us now!
The maiden mist hath woven the moon's soft beams
Into a colored necklace—o'er her breast,
She's thrown the glowing band and there it hangs!
Sweet sign of light, all hail! A century
Scarce sees a rainbow after sunset's hour.
The mist is crowned with colors and the crests
Are diademed with snow; the blazing stars
Are God's white beacons on the heights of Heav'n—
As ours shall be upon these hills, and e'en
The shroud of night hath too, its weft of gold;—
That rainbow ring that plights the maiden mist
Unto the amorous moon, as by this ring
Of fellowship, we pledge an endless troth
Unto the land we love! (*Sits down.*)

FURST. 'Tis true. Look, men;
God's rainbow arms embrace the lake.

PEAS. (*From among Uri's men.*) O now we'll purge
Our cantons of our foes and Uri's men
Shall help you drive the tyrants forth.

STOUF. Well said.
Ye are the peasants of the Schachen dale
That gives to Schwitz her finest men. Our land
Will soon be free when Schachen's men are roused.

HEUBER. But Schwytz has had her freedom once before.
We've more freemen than Uri, therefore must
Prepare a larger force.

STOUF. (*Moving to the center.*) Thou dost speak well,
And like the pious freeman that thou art.
Schwytz sent to Faenza, you remember, Baron,

An army for the Emperor Frederick,
And tho we were rewarded well and given
The Empire's strong protection, see our foes;—
The Austrian King and his bad governors
Who tear the Empire's shield away. (*Retires.*)

KASS. (*Moving to the center.*) Friends, we in Unterwalden as you know
Had not received a charter, but we leagued
With Stanz and Sarnen for defense, and tho
The Pope had censured us for it, we'll fight
Together now for all, just as of yore,
When we gave pledge to Uri and to Schwytz. (*Retires.*)

FURST. (*Moving to the center.*)
'Twas long ago, when Uri's charter was giv'n.
Henry attested it. We were assured
Dependence on the Empire; not a lord.
No brigand governor as Gessler is
Ruled over us; alone the amman * then
Judged our disputes. King Rudolf, good old man;
Beloved by all the peasants;—he who sewed
His own grey coat after the battle's fray;—
Himself in Altdorf 'neath the linden tree,
Near where the cap will hang, sat as our judge.
Ask Albert to,—he would reply, "Submit
Unto my governors. They'll judge!" O brothers
They'll judge but by their own caprice; dispense
Their brutal blows and prey upon our homes.

HUM. (*Rising.*) When Winkelried, the Baron and I, were chosen
To supplicate the Emperor at Strasburg;
We waited there;—in vain prevailing too.

* A magistrate.

" Confirm," we said, " our charters; yield to us
What e'en the Roman Empire hath bestowed."
But no! That vulture-king, that wantons so
With precious liberty; who would deform
The features of our souls; bind us as slaves,
Replied: " I am too busy with more important
things."
No purpose had he to redress our wrongs
And we, of honorable intent, who bore
The prayer of all, were so dismissed that those
Who filled the palace gazed on our disgrace.
And then our governors appeared, to rule
Not in the Empire's but in Austria's name.
O brothers, ev'n King Albert's nephew John,
Demanding of his uncle rightfully
To rule o'er his inheritance, was spurned
And taunted with eluding wiles. " You wish
To rule? " King Albert asked. " Then go prepare
A crown of fruit tree leaves and top yourself
With that." Tightening the tenons of his grit
John muttered " Vengeance "; damned the ermined
rogue
And blustered out. We must redress ourselves;
Assume our country's guidance now nor hope
For sympathy or help from Austrian kings.

(*Retires.*)

BARON. Well said; now brothers, let me speak.
FURST. Proceed.
KASS. Speak! Baron, speak!
BARON. What Hum has said is true.
I was there with him; heard King Albert swear
He'd capture us as fishes in a net.

Glarus he has; Einsiedlin too; Lucerne
And Zug, whose marts he closed to plague our trade.
Thus force us to submit. O how our vales
Sink deeper with these woes! Each narrow pass,
By tolls contracted more; bold brigands thieve
And toss their bounties in the peacock's beak.
Shall Schwitz, whose snowy mounts are Heavenly springs,
Set in mid-airs, not buried in the Earth;—
At which immaculate fountains, fed by God,
Great rivers drink,—the Rhine, the Rhone, the Po;
At whose great gate, the Gotthardt gorge, converge
Five mountain chains to bend their stony brows
In mute obeisance to our land; ah, shall
That Schwitz to whom e'en God pays homage so,
Making commutual both our loves, be yoked
Enslaved, downtrod by petty man?

(*Cries: No, no! Never!*)

Who is the despot, but who doth deceive
The people to accept his shallow sway!
As if the boundless oceans which receive
The tribute of a little stream, should stay
Their tides when e'er the brook would change its way!
O brothers, my head is bowed; my end is nigh;
My shield and sword are yours for Schwitz's foes!—
No burial yet for them for many a year;—
Then prime your manly vigor for the fray;
Your fatherland demands your strength to-day!

ARN. (*Rushing to the center.*)

Arise! We'll storm the castles now! Up, men!
No more recount your sorrows nor explain
The tyrant's fatal spell! Let action wean
Us from our woe, and let no promises

Appease our rising wrath! Can vultures lose
Their thirst for blood, or vandals vie for praise
When mantled in dissembling virtue's garb?
While one hand served, the other'd stab its prey;
Thus Honor's means would serve Dishonor's ends.
O let the whirlwind of our growing power
Sweep over the obstructions of a few
Whose shallow sceptre sways not e'en an hour
If but the men of might arise to do
What e'en the weakest dreams of! Hear ye, men?

(*Cries: We hear! we hear!*)

Arise and on unto the castles then!

BARON. No, no. That must not be. Thou hast great zeal,
But temper it; be not too rash, good youth.

(*Quiet among all. Arnold sits down.*)

We must abide by law. God will approve
Sober restrictions on our zeal. Mine too,
Perhaps inspiring thy precipitous haste
Doth need more moderate accents in its tone.

ARN. Let it be so then, but that shackle taunts
My soul.

BARON. Remember, men; we now renew
Our league of sixteen years ago; the bund
Wherein we swore a union 'gainst our foes.
Our honor's rested in its terms; and God's
Approval doth depend on our respect
Of it.

KASS. Give us all its provisions, Baron.

FURST. Repeat them for us.

STOUF. All must listen well.

BARON. Whoever hath a lord, let him obey

The laws of service, provided that the liege
Shall not destroy his freedom; and who is
A vassal to the abbeys, Zurich, Wettingen,
Pay what is due. No foreign judge shall we
Receive within our dales; nor one who's bought
His place. Our controversies shall be judged
By but the wisest; those who kill or steal
Shall be condemned with punishment that fits.

STOUF. (*Arising.*) I'm vassal to the Empire; that is all.

FURST. And I. No Austrian overlord for me.

KASS. I willingly pay rent to the good lord
Of Schwinsperg.

LUSSER. And I to you, good Baron.

BARON. Do ye all swear to this, our former bund?

(*Cries: We do! They raise their right hands in affirmation.*)

BARON. Men, that is good. Schwitz is united now.

ARN. (*Rising.*) Nay, nay; not yet. There're nobles young and old
Who spurn our cause. The servile minions cling
To Albert's henchmen in our soil. O damn
Such mongers of the tyrant's crumbs!
His willing slaves eat from his gilded hand,
That feeds their fawning with its tawdry flash.
Ah, none of them betray their votaries,
For they compose a most chivalric band
Where Honor finds his home and Virtue, her command.

FURST. Forget them Arnold; they'll discover soon
That Schwitz will have no home for such as they.

ARN. True, true, but watch them with their clever guile

Pose as the poor man's friend, yet gladly seek
The plaudits of the peacock's tongue!
KLEG. But how
Can they do ill to our intents, whilst we
Have faith in God in Heaven above?
ARN. That may
Be so, but renegades disturb my soul.
Each little fool regards the tyranny
A thing by which his house may surely gain.
Let not cajoling tributes swamp our souls.
FURST. Ah, Arnold, never. Think you the tyrant's smile
His gift or glance, can quench my spirit's fire?
STOUF. Or mine again?
ARN. Only a fool will scoff
And call my thought a whim!
BARON. Arnold, Arnold,
Not quite so hasty, lad.
FURST. The zealot spurns
Whoever chides his vim.
ARN. Ah, mock me then.
God knows I try my best. Oft have I prayed
On mounts that lift my feet unto the clouds
To lift my spirit with them. The starry deeps
Have oft shown shallows in my soul. O God,
Awake my heart and shift its shoals away,
Then may prodigious Heaven's mystic waves
Surge with its mightiest billows over it!
The caverns echo every sound, thus would
I echo yonder Heaven's spir't and will.
O mock me not, but sanctify my words!
FURST. (*Rising to embrace him.*) Peace, peace.
I do believe you, Arnold.

Come and sit down with me.

(*The Baron lays his hand on Arnold's shoulder.*)

BARON. Good youth, thou knowest
We do not mock thee. Thou art of our bund;
Our hearts are with thee and we'll heed thy words.

ARN. (*Moving away.*) Then rise and trample out discordant sounds!
How gladly rings the voice that calls to war!

(*A cow-herder's horn is heard sounding afar off.*)

Hark! 'Tis the voice of early morn.

BARON. Come now;
We must complete our plans. 'Twill soon be day.

(*Arnold and Furst sit down together.*)

STOUF. We must secure the castles. Without them
We can do nothing.

ARN. Let us all take arms,
On Wednesday, before St. Martin's day and charge
The strongholds, Rossberg, Sarnen, and the rest

WINKEL. It can't be done. A siege is too precipitate.

STOUF. But we must hasten or our plot will be Disclosed.

BARON. Not after each one's taken oath
And sworn to secrecy.

ARN. The traitorous spies
Will mark our steps; our very homes. O men,
Have care what ye shall say and do.

WINKEL. Men, we must wait. A siege would cause the King
To send huge forces, crushing us with them.
Be stealthy and use strategy.

BARON. But how?
WINKEL. (*Stepping forward.*)
This way. Postpone our siege for eight weeks more.
'Twill then be New Year's day. The custom is
You know, to crowd in Sarnen's castle yard
To take our greetings in; the lambs, and calves
Or cheese. Well then, as 'twill be cold, each man,
By doubling blouses, can conceal therein
An iron pike; a spear point for his stave
And thus a lance for Schwitz's foes. When once
We, with our crafty gifts, that will disguise
Our hearts, and with our pikes that will belie
Our gifts, have crowded 'yond the archway there,
We'll mount our well-sworn lances on the staves;
Discard the perjuring gifts; charge on the foe;
Sound trumpet calls to allies in the woods;
Thus, with their onward rush into the yard,
We'll quickly overcome the garrison
And make it ours. (*Retires.*)
ARN. (*Rising.*) Well planned, the best way yet!
I'd bear a gentle lamb to Sarnen's gate
To perjure my intent, then draw my steel
'Gainst him who drove his steel thru father's eyes.
Lead on! I'll armor me with soft, white doves;
With tender chamois; frightened deer, and then
Forswear their mildness with my vulture swoop
On Landenberg himself.
BARON. Have you forgotten
We'll try to shed no blood?

(*Arnold sits down without replying.*)

FURST. The plan is good.
Rossberg must be besieged at that time too.

STOUF. And all three cantons rise on New Year's day
And drive the bailiffs out. Küssnacht, Rossberg,
And Sarnen too,—strongholds of tyranny,
Shall all be captured by our ruse.
BARON. Are all
Agreed? (*Replies: Yes; yes.*) Then shall we do it.
But, good men,
Until the joyful day, endure all things
Without complaint. Tell no man of our plans;
Nor kill nor steal when we besiege the walls,
But drive the tyrants and their minions forth.
Let no one act alone, but bide by what
We've planned.
KLEG. What of the pris'n in Uri, Baron?
FURST. The curb of Uri shall be razed and its
Black dungeon filled with whitest snows.
STOUF. And ev'n
The Castle Lowerz be destroyed as well.
ARN. And then the bale-fires on our hills, whose beams
Can race thruout the cantons in a night,
Shall flame our joys to Heaven and Earth.
BARON. Look! look!
Who is that coming there?

(*Enter Tell at the right.*)

ARN. 'Tis Tell.
BAUM. (*Running to greet him.*) Friend Tell,
I wish that thou hadst come before.
BARON. (*To Tell.*) We've missed
Thee, but thou'rt here in time to take the oath
Of our confederacy.

TELL. I've come to say
The cap will be up soon, so hurry on.
For you must pass thru Altdorf, homeward bound.
STOUF. Not Schwytz's men.
TELL. What have you done to-night?

(*Day begins to dawn.*)

BARON. We'll tell you later. Take the oath with us.
You, Klegter, give it. Now let all stand up.

(*All stand up and take off their hats.*)

KLEG. Before your God, swear ye to steadfastness;
To cling to this confederacy; to free
Your land; your homes; protect your families
From tyrant's trespass and to trust in God
For help?
ALL. We swear it.
KLEG. I also swear.
In sign whereof, now raise your right hands thus.

(*Raises his toward the Heavens. The others do likewise. Silence a moment. Day dawns a little more.*)

Heaven's cheeks grow paler at our oath
Thus consecrated at the birth of dawn!
Before the sun doth furl night's silver flags
Around the masts of day, look on the stars
The silent tutors of our faith and love.

(*All do so.*)

Our upheld hands are heralds of loyalty,
But upturned eyes are prayers themselves, whose fruits
Shall be the freedom of our blessed land!
Heaven, mark your meaning on our souls, and may

The star-steps printed there guide us to God!
The sun may now enclose those stars within
Its sepulchre of light, their spir'ts shall rise
To flash a benediction o'er our souls!

(*He drops his arm; the rest do likewise. Silence a moment. Morning dawns brighter; a faint sound of singing voices is heard from across the lake.*)

KLEG. O hark! That song, like Glarus' morning chants,
Awakes the slumbering and greets our sleepless souls.

BARON. Hear me once more! Trust God and change ye not,
Altho this level ground heaves into hills
To spite the peaks; nature grow riotous
With change; altho God's hands in moving o'er
The Earth, upon whose weary lap the mountains sit,
Sweeps them into the sea; altho yon' Heav'n,
Whose silver eyes may tire with looking down,
Glanceth those globes aside and lieth still,
Fatigued with turning round; altho the Earth
Aweary with its standing still, moves off,
And all things else, fatigued with being, shall change,
O change ye not; trust God! We shall be free!

(*Momentary silence.*)

Now let us all depart the way we came.

(*They do so.*)

ACT IV

On the market place in Altdorf. A broad clearing; houses and shops at the right, between the two roads, one of which passes straight across the stage

in the foreground; the other, from its intersection at the far left with the first road, shoots off at an angle and leads out at the right in the background.

In the middle of the clearing are gathered Gessler, an Austrian nobleman, three guards with pikes; two men digging a hole for the pole, and an overseer.

The mountains are in the rear, over which the sun is just rising; the prison, Zwing Uri, with two of its finished walls showing in the background at the left.

Linden and other trees around. Time: early morning.

GESSL. (*Seated on his horse and holding a purple cap.*)
Quick, quick, you laggards! Come, dig faster there!
The ground's not frozen yet, nor is it rock.
See, yonder sun doth raise his head, but not
Unto the cap! You tardy spadesmen, dig!

OVERSEER. You slothful hinds, come, get to work and dig.

(*The men dig faster.*)

NOBLE. (*Mounted.*) There is a fair to-day; that royal cap
Will thus receive respects from all.

GESSL. It will,
Because it doth not plead but makes demand
As doth the titled king upon the throne.

NOBLE. This market place that wears a ducal cap
Should find the buyers crowding every stall.

GESSL. Quite true, but these proud people may not see
King Albert's honors woven in its cloth.

NOBLE. What wouldst thou do if they should jeer
its folds
And spurn the primacy of its just dues?
GESSL. If any challenge this ceremonious toll,
They'll suffer quickly. Yes, there are a few
Who'll boast refusal in this public place,
To make the royal ritual of a bow
Before that cap; 'tis they I wish to trap.
Dig, dig there, men! Why, look! the sun has crept
Above the mountain twice as far as ye
Have dug the hole deep, in less time as well.
OVER. Give me the spade. (*Takes it and digs.*)
Why don't you dig like this?
(*Enter two of Gessler's spies.*)
1ST SPY. Lord Governor, the three cantons have
held
A meeting at the Rütli. They dispersed
Before the dawn.
GESSL. The traitors! Ah, what right
Have they to pose as councillors?
Did not the King refuse them charters, too?
They have their native magistrates—such should
Be all they need.
2D SPY. Lord Governor, we do
Not know what 'twas they planned or did, but soon
Some will be coming home this way.
GESSL. That's good!
Quick, men! I'll catch them. Now up with that
pole!
OVER. In three more minutes, Governor.
NOBLE. And then
The cap will play the scythe and Uri's keep
Will garner the rank stubble of stiff knees,

Yes, roots and all.

GESSL. O! this penurious loyalty
Of peasant knaves, lacks proper soil for growth
Into rich love for Austria. A diet
Upon the Rütli? Ha, at midnight, too.
They love the dark,—well, Uri's keep is dark.
I'll cramp their next assemblage there. Its soil,—
Whose sun is an embrasure's narrow slit;
Whose skies, black rafters are,—will foster seeds
Of loyalty these hills and wider fields
Can never nurture into life.

NOBLE. Well said,
I'll tell the King of thy good words and plans
To help his interests here.

GESSL. My methods, Sir,
Are not like zig-zag sheep paths on the hills;
But straight, direct; just as that standing pole
Will be.

NOBLE. Well spoken, good Lord Governor.
You are a stanchion wall of Albert's power.

GESSL. I'll be a griffin crouching near the cap
To grasp with lion's paw and eagle's beak
Those who refuse the bow.

1ST SPY. (*Pointing to the left.*) Look, look; they come!

NOBLE. See! Who is that?

2D SPY. That's Baron Attinghausen.

GESSL. (*Throws the cap to the overseer.*) Put up that cap, no matter if the hole
Be made or not. Quick now!

(*Enter at the left the Baron, Furst, and his son; Arnold, Baumgarten, Klegter, Hum, and about ten peasants. All are armed.*)

GESSL. (*To the workmen.*) You laggards, you!
BARON. Good morning, my Lord Governor.

(*Gessler does not heed. Spurs his horse on to the workmen; none of them scan the incomers closely.*)

BARON. (*To his own people.*) Hasten, men,
And do not tarry here. Look, there's the cap;
They're putting up the pole.

GESSL. (*To the men who are fumbling with the pole in their haste and excitement.*)
You fools! Let me!

(*Dismounts. In the meantime the incomers have moved to the right along the back road.*)

ARN. (*To Gessler's men.*) Where's that limp diadem upon a pole?
Aha, a woolen cap, with lofty lineage
Unto a lamb's back! Who would bow to it?

GESSL. You churl!

BARON. Arnold, pass by in silence, sir.
All of you, too.

(*They move on further, glancing back to the group around the pole.*)

BAUM. But where is Tell? Who knows?
The cap is going up and he must pass this way!

FURST. He stopped at Fluelen to see Jacob Ulrich
And get some cross-bow strings and arrows there.

BARON. Ah, 'tis too late to warn him now. The cap
Is up.

(*Gessler's men put the pole in place with the cap upon it; then make the pole secure at the base.*)

BAUM. Nay, never mind, I would abase
Myself for Tell; bow to the cap; return
To warn him.

BARON. No, it cannot be. Thou mayst
Not find him. Make no bow. Tell will espy
The cap and go another way.
GESSL. At last
The royal cap is up! Now let me be
The crier myself. Ho ye! Hear all! Each one
(*The Baron's party stops and listens.*)
Who passes by this cap, must make a bow
As to the Austrian King, but who will not,
Shall be imprisoned; fined or treated as
I deem it best. Now let me bow,—the first
To show his homage to the Austrian crown.
(*Lifts his hat and bows.*)
NOBLE. (*Dismounts.*) And I the next. (*Bows likewise.*)
GESSL. (*To his men.*) Men, do as we.
(*The workmen lift their hats and bow.*)
Well done.
(*To the Baron's party.*)
Now, come and bow before the Austrian shrine!
BARON. Thy words inspire my silence into speech.
'Twas here good Rudolph sat as judge, and yet
That cap, the purple tongue of tyrannous Austria,
Here sentences to shame or chains and heeds
No witnesses for our defense! Base cap
That probes the market place to rasp our hearts,
And, pointing Heavenward, lureth us to Hell;
Thou mute mock-master of our backs
We are not minions yet and will not bow!
NOBLE. The peasant-noble makes a speech!
ARN. But not
A bow!

OVER. Lord Governor, that's Arnold Melchthal;
And there's Baumgarten too.

GESSL. Those villains here?
And I have only three armed men! Where is
My lazy guard?

FURST. My lord, you should have made
The purple thing arise before the sun.

GESSL. It should have been up all the night as ye;
Perched o'er the Rütli, so?

BARON. (*Astonished.*) What doth that mean?
Let no one speak. On, men; away from here!

(*He and the others go out at the right, background road.*)

GESSL. I shall inform the King of that and he
Will send a larger force to these domains.

(*To his guards with pikes.*)

Men, guard that cap well and let no one pass
By it, in either way, unless they yield
The homage I prescribed.

1ST GRD. We understand.

(*Gessler and the Nobleman mount their horses; as they do so two men enter from a house near the background right and without noticing the cap or men, proceed to unlock the broad shutters over the market stalls. While doing so they catch sight of the cap.*)

1ST MAN. Look, Melchior, look; there is the ducal cap.

2D MAN. 'Tis so! And here upon our market place.

(*Gessler and the Nobleman ride away slowly, to the right, on the foreground road, listening to the men talking. His workmen follow.*)

1ST MAN. Put back the shutter, Melchior. There will be
No market on my stalls to-day.

2D MAN. That's right.
We'll lose a day's trade rather than that cap
Should stare at us so long.

(*They close up the shutters. Gessler stops.*)

1ST MAN. And let us go
And tell the townsfolk to remain away.

2D MAN. We'll do so instantly.

1ST MAN. Come on!

(*They go out, at the right over the back road.*)

GESSL. The knaves!
Saint Valentine's plague strike on them with its curse!

(*He and the others go out, front road, right.*)

1ST GRD. By St. Jacob, there'll be none pass to-day.

2D GRD. Who's going to bow to that but those the Governor
Cares not to catch?

3D GRD. But all that pass shall bow,
Or then,—my trusty pike, up for the foe!

1ST GRD. Here comes old Peter Gerig.

(*Enter Gerig, at right foreground road.*)

3D GRD. He's for the King.

GERIG. Why, there's the ducal cap; a fine old symbol too;
Put up this morn, I judge. As good men should
I'll make a matin bow to it and venture
For vesper favors from the governor to-day.

(*Bows profusely. To the guards.*)

I'm Peter Gerig, men. You know me? Yes?

(*No reply. Moves on and out, while speaking.*)

I barter bows for benefits to-day.

3D GRD. That tedious renegade does business well.
2D GRD. His back is quite a hinge.
1ST GRD. His bow upon
This market place, has got its market price.

(*Franz runs in from the left. Attempts to pass without bowing.*)

3D GRD. (*Barring his way.*) Halt! Bow down to the cap!
FRANZ. What's that? What cap?
2D GRD. (*Pointing.*) Look there!
FRANZ. Move 'way! I don't see any cap.
Quick! Indergrandt's cow fell in the crevasse,
And I must go and get him aid. Let be!
3D GRD. Bow to the cap then.
FRANZ. I'm near-sighted, man.
I do not see the cap. (*Looks aroundabout.*)
3D GRD. You peasant-jester,
Lift up your eyes.
FRANZ. Ach, it's too sunny, man.
Let me move on.
2D GRD. No; hold him there. The knave
Must bow.
FRANZ. Then place me just before the pole
I'll look at it. (*Feigns that the sun glares in his eyes.*)
3D GRD. Come then. (*Leads him to the pole.*) You see that pole?
FRANZ. O yes. There is the pole; the cap's on it?
I can't look up, the sun is in my eyes.
But then I'll bow unto the pole; (*Bows.*) the pole; (*Bows.*)
The pole. (*Bows.*) There, Sirs, is that enough?
Good pole,

I'll bow again. It does one's back much good
To bend like this so early in the day. (*Bows.*)

3D GRD. (*Pushing him off.*) Now out of here!
Run off!

FRANZ. (*Moves off, then turns and stops.*)
O the cow is in the crevice,
And the cap is on the pole,—
Of which shall I give notice?

(*Pause.*)

That the beast is in the hole!
O wait till you
Want passage o'er the lake, I'll make you bow!

(*Runs along the right foreground road just as Gessler and a score of armed men come in that way.*)

GESSL. What is this yelling for? (*He stops.*)

FRANZ. (*Running out.*) A cow, my lord.

(*Margreth enters rear road, right. Has a basket on her arm; sings as she walks along, gazing at the sun and heeding no one.*)

O where are the loves of yesterday?
My heart doth sigh with this sad lay!
Gone where the fainting echo lies;
Gone where the rainbow's color dies,
Where starlight goes by day. (*Stops; faces the east.*)
Gone where the fleeting shadows fly;
Where flaming dreams of young hearts lie;
Where sweetest music always flows;
Where heart's best treasure ever goes!
Gone as the words of this my strain,
Gone to never return again.

(*Turns toward the cap; sees Gessler; draws back startled.*)

1sd Grd. Bow to the cap, sweet lass.

Marg. (*Kneeling before Gessler's horse.*) Lord Governor
Release him now! O end his dark repose!
And lift from off my breast the prison walls
That yoke my heart to torture and despair.

Gessl. Hush, hush; bow to the cap and run along.

Marg. I'll bow to do thy will, then, do thou mine.

(*Arises and curtsies before the cap.*)

There, sir. I bowed for love; no more. Now turn
His night to day! Be thou the morning sun
Whose shafts will pierce the blackness of his tomb
Lord Governor, be thou his golden light!

Gessl. Begone! begone!

Marg. Release him!

Gessl. (*Moving his hand to his sword.*) Begone, I say!

Marg. Thou wouldst not strike again?

Gessl. Move from my path!

Marg. (*Bursting into tears; moves to the left; sings.*)

Where are the loves of yesterday?
Dear Jesu drive my woe away
To some lone, drear and unsunned waste
The loving heart should never taste!
Away to the depths of endless night;
Cold, starless, bleak and infinite.

(*Goes out.*)

O where are the loves of yesterday
Ah cease, sad singer, cease thy lay!

Act IV

(Enter on the background road at the right, Landvogt Trautman. Stops and looks around.)

TRAUT. Indeed! I will not pass that cap or bow
Unless it be like Uri's bull, who'd bend
His head to toss the cap and pole beyond
The Bannberg's * top. Why, one might think this town
Were Cæsar's toll camp! Seems to me it's worse.

(Goes out haughtily where he entered.)

(From the front road right are heard calls, "Father," "Father." Then the boys Walter and William Tell run in; seeing Gessler, guards and cap, they stop suddenly.)

GESSL. Come here my boys, whom are you calling so?
WALT. My father, William Tell.
GESSL. Aha, and you
Are looking for him too! Tell me, my lad,
What do you want with him?
WM. O sir
A giant vulture drove Hifeli's calf
To th' edge of an abyss and flapped his wings
So hard the calf fell over. Then the bird
Flew downward after it and dug her claws
Into its tender flesh.
WALT. Hifeli groaned
So hard!
WM. We must tell father, sir.
GESSL. Not yet.
Boys; that cap there stands for the King. You must
Bow down to it. Guard, lead them to the pole.

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* A hill near Altdorf.

(*A guard comes forward; takes each by the arm. Just as he makes a step, Tell with his bow rushes in from the left, and passes the pole without bowing.*)

TELL. How dare you touch my boys? Hands off, I say.

(*Pushes the guard aside.*)

WALT. O Father, Hifeli's calf fell in the abyss.

GESSL. (*Dismounting.*) How dare you pass that cap without a bow? (*Tell does not heed.*) You understand my words, so answer me.

TELL. (*Not heeding Gessler.*) It must be dead now, so run home, my boys;
And feed Hifeli well and cheer her too.

GESSL. You impudent knave! Come, answer me!

TELL. (*To his boys.*) And if
She's moaning much, then stroke her gently, so.

(*Shows them how.*)

Now, run along.

GESSL. No; they shall not; you boys
Stay here. Tell, why did you not make your bow?

TELL. My lord, I rushed in to protect my boys,
And did not think your grace attached so much
Importance to a bow in such a case.
I was not cautious, Sir, and if I were,
My name would not be Tell. Is that enough?

GESSL. Well then, bow to it now.

TELL. First, let my boys,
Leave, Sir. Now Walter, William too, run home.

GESSL. What! You defy my orders here!

TELL. My sons,
Go home. (*They start off, Gessler stops them.*)

GESSL. Stand still. I am the governor.
Which of your boys, do you, Sir, love the more?

TELL. My children are both equally dear to me,
And yet, I think I kiss the younger one the most.
GESSL. Then Tell, lift up your bow and show your skill.
You're the best archer in the land; one can
Not find your equal anywhere. So shoot
An apple from the crown of that one's head,
A hundred paces off.

(*Points to Walter, then pointing to a linden tree, speaks to him.*)

Stand over there.
(*To a guard.*) Guard, fetch an apple from that stall, and break
The shutters, if you must, but get the thing.

(*Guard goes.*)

Now Tell, you understand your work. You've used
Your bow for many years.
TELL. (*Shouting aloud.*) God's martyrdom!
I'll not do that. (*Throws down his bow.*)
GESSL. Then thou shalt die, a traitor
Unto the King; thy boy shall die as well.
TELL. O let it be complained to God and Christ
That I must kill my flesh and blood!

(*The Baron, Furst, Arnold, Stouffacher, his wife, Klegter and Heinrich come in hastily. The men are armed.*)

BARON. What's that, friend Tell?
TELL. The governor orders me
To shoot an apple from my Walter's head
A hundred paces off.

(*Great indignation among them.*)

BARON. Lord Governor,
Can this be true?

GESSL. 'Tis true. Make way. Here comes my guard.
He has the apple too. (*Guard returns with it.*)
GERT. He's broken Scharer's shop
To get it. O, how long must these things be?
GESSL. As long as traitors scoff that cap, woman.
Guard, lead the boy unto the linden tree.
Bind him there; place the apple on his head.
TELL. (*Picking up his bow; stepping close to his boy.*)
Stop, stop. Think well. Beware my trusty bow!
It urges awful deeds upon my hands.
So flatter not my skill nor tempt my wrath.
GESSL. (*To the two other guards.*) Stand by him, men, and should he raise his bow,
Against me, strike him down.
(*Guards take places near Tell.*) Now lead the boy
Unto the linden tree. (*Guard with the apple does so.*)
Make ready, Tell.
TELL. O Sir, consider anguish more than skill!
I pray thee, Governor, give respite from this task!
I'll bow unto the cap! I cannot shoot!
My skill would starve within my hand and die
Should mine eyes gaze in such a brutal aim.
GESSL. Thou hast shot tender chamois and hast aimed
Without a pang upon the birds, now aim
Upon that apple there.

(*The guard has placed Walter against the tree and is tying him fast.*)

TELL. O pray for me,
Dear people. Dying is less punishment

Than shooting thus. O God, what can I do?

(*Commotion among the people.*)

GERT. Lord Governor, take back thy charge! What mask
Of cunning doth impute thy crime unto
Desire to see an archer's skill? Thou art
Adroit, but God who lights Heav'n's passage thru
The dark with silver lamps, will recompense
Our passage thru these pangs with righteous rage
That will not pander to thy power!

GESSL. Don't threaten me
With after-throes. I serve the King and who
Does that, does well.

BARON. But wounds a higher Lord.
Thy læsa majestas unto High God
Commands immediate punishment, for He
Will hold no pending suits 'gainst sinners such
As thou.

GESSL. Enough of this. The apple's there.
Now shoot. Thou hearest, Tell?

WALT. Shoot, Father, shoot.
I trust thy aim.

TELL. (*Takes an arrow and fixes it in his bow, then aims amid great consternation. Lets his bow fall.*)
I can't! I can't! O take
My life and let my son go free!

GESSL. Ye both
Must die, Tell, if thou dost not shoot.

GERT. No, no!
It will not be! I'll die in their defense!

GESSL. Come, woman, take your heart from off your lips

And put discretion there. I'll order thee
Deported from this place. Seest thou those guards?

STOUF. I will strike dead whoever harms my wife.

GERT. Lord Governor I fear thee not. Thou canst
Not wanton with my spir't. I ask of thee
Why make this solemn pageantry of father's love
A spectacle of awful chance; that chance, a rite
In the performance of thy tyrannous will,
And that performance, slaughter of a child?
Hast thou no conscience that doth stay thy tongue?
O thine intent's a devil's forgery;
A counterfeit of kingly rule whose false
Perusal of our hearts, reads fear thereon.

GESSL. Go home now to your cheeses, woman.

STOUF. Wert thou and I alone, I'd draw my sword
On thee.

GESSL. Take aim, Tell. Quick, there's little time.

GERT. No, no! He must not! I'll unbind that child.

(*Darts forward. Guards stop her.*)

Ye minions of the satyr, let me be!
O! were mine anger a sufficient foil,
That arrow would not lunge! Ye winds, congeal
To thickness that will parry every thrust,
And paralyze the arrow's speed, in thine
Impromptu barricade and let
It dangle there, a sign of wrath to come
Upon the base contriver of this ill!

(*Moves back to Tell; some townspeople hurry in and gather about.*)

GESSL. The mouse is in the trap. Shoot or ye both
Shall die.

TELL. (*Raises his bow. Stands agitated; aims; his arms tremble and he lets them fall again.*)
The apple's gone! I cannot see
It now;—yes; there it is again.

ARN. Some angel
God sends to pilot th' arrow thru the air,
Doth fly between thee and thy son. Shoot now!

TELL. That angel is the mist that doth ascend
From vales of fear. O how my heart beats now;—
As oft my bow string snaps!—my arm that knew
Less trembling than the oak, doth shake! Release
Me from this task, Lord Governor!

GESSL. Tell shoot;
Thou didst not hesitate to row across
The lake e'en thru the storm;—shoot now or die!

GERT. The daisy's chance in pleading with the fohn
That it break not her stem, is more than thine
In pleading with this brutal governor.

FURST. God help thee, Tell, to shoot. It must be done.

GESSL. Make way there! Give him room.

(*Townspeople move back.*)

TELL. O thou white scarf that girds my rolling eyes
Hold them in place that I may see the mark.

(*Slowly lifts his bow.*)

Ye airs, move off, and leave me here alone
With softest vacancy! Bow, spring thy best!

Mine arrow, tread thy straightest path unto the mark,
Thus help a father's love do penance here
To please the culprit's whim.

(*Lifts his bow; lowers it suddenly; places one hand on his brow.*)

What eddies here!
Thou whirlpool ground stand still! (*Staggers.*)

BARON. My Lord, dost thou not see his agony?

FURST. Why torture any more?

GERT. What cruelty
Thou dost invent!

ARN. My spirit too, proud lord,
Which doth not cringe and is not bribed with fear
Exacts my words in Tell's defense.
Thy tyranny's a parasite upon
Parental love and on a bowman's skill.
God waiteth night to punish thee.

GESSL. Guards, watch
The angle of his bow. Let him not point
But to the tree.

KLEG. (*Coming forward.*) And by the cross I cry
Turn thou the sharpening angle of thy wrath
From this man's heart! (*Withdraws.*)

GESSL. Thou surely priest!
Tell, I command thee, shoot!

GERT. (*To the people.*) Ye men of Schwitz.
What have ye made a bund for? Why your oath?
Remember Rütli's darkness and your trust!

GESSL. Remember woman, that my guard is here.

GERT. How weak we are! The very mountains chafe

Their hands at this exhaustion of our help!
These prostrate airs, depressed with Schwitz's grief
So halt the wafture of the clouds that morn's
Gold brow is greyed with woe!

GESSL. (*To Tell.*) This is my last command.

GERT. Tell, thou must shoot,
And may thy pilgrim arrow reach its shrine
And cleave no furrow for Death's retinue!
No kindred wand'rers lend it company;
No alms but prayers that help it on its way,
And call down blessings from the area
Of aid. Ye chambered airs, throw back your doors
And let this slender palmer pass! O may
Thy soul stress find a sanctuary too;
Thy growing woe and pilgrim arrow reach
Their fitting and their destined sepulchre!

GESSL. Enough of invocation, woman!
Now say no more. Tell, if thou lovest life
Do thou the deed without delay.

(*Tell looks at Gessler fixedly, then takes a second arrow from his quiver and tucks it in his blouse. He looks steadily at his boy. Slowly raises his bow.*)

GERT. (*To Gessler.*) Not yet!
My prayers will cleave thru mid-most Heav'n above
And barter hope for help, but thine which are
Impetuous invocations unto hate,—
Too passion-fostered for a supplicant
To God,—would cleave Earth's nether crust and pour
Hell's privy-coffers and its treasured fire
Upon our land.

GESSL. But rather its than thine.

STOUF. (*Drawing his sword.*) Yet rather this sword gleam than thy insults! (*Flourishes it.*)

BARON. Nay. Rather peace than either of the two.
Lord Governor, in God's name and in man's,
I do demand that thou withdrawest thy charge.
Let mercy dwell within thy heart.
GESSL. Enough!
Thy soft talk's good for girls, but not for me.
FURST. Sir, let the winter of thy wrath pass by;
Its hoarfrost melt in mercy's seasoning heat!
ARN. Look, look; he's aiming now!
FURST. He's shot!

(*While attention has been given to the Governor, Tell has shot.*)

GESSL. What's that?
THE PEOPLE. The apple's pierced! Hurrah! hurrah! Tell's free!
GERT. The boy is safe!
GUARD. (*Near Walter.*) Right thru the core it went!
GESSL. The apple's hit?
TELL. (*Rushing forward.*) Unbind, unbind my child!

(*Guard does so. Tell embraces him. Young William runs to them. The guards follow Tell to watch him.*)

GESSL. Slipped from my grasp again!
ARN. O what a shot!

(*Runs forward and picks up the apple.*)

It looks as if the arrow grew in there!
O master archer, thou hast shot at Death
And pinioned him, while swooping on his prey!

(*Tell sits down to rest; Gertrude leans on the arm of Stouffacher. Arnold returns to show the apple to the people.*)

GESSL. Here! let me see the thing. (*As Arnold gives it to him, Gessler stares at him fiercely.*)
Quick, tell me, youth,
Art thou that Arnold—(*Arnold turns and dashes out at the right, background road. All stare amazed.*)
Well, one at a time.
A splendid shot indeed. How could he do it?
GERT. How could he do it? Ask God who gave him love;
Redeemed his skill and ransomed him from fear,
Thy sentence put upon him, wicked man.
GESSL. I'm not so bad or I would 'prison thee,
And let four stone walls muffle thy pert tongue.
GERT. Thou art a fiend whose proud regalia
Are symbols of a bitter heart.
BARON. Hush, hush!
Let's leave this memorable place, whereon
The ducal cap has sown its misery,
And where thine arrow's matchless miracle,
Friend Tell, hath made thee free.
WALT. (*As Tell arises.*) O Father, I knew
Thou couldst not miss—but now let us go home
To mother—and Hifeli too.
TELL. Yes, child,
But tell her nothing that has happened here.

(*The Baron, Furst, Gertrude, Tell and the others begin their departure over the background road, to the right.*)

GESSL. Stop! I command you all; stop where ye are.
Tell, I would question thee. (*All stop.*)
TELL. Ask what thou wilt.

GESSL. Come closer to me. (*He does so.*) Tell me, why didst thou,
Enclose a second arrow in thy blouse?
TELL. Why, Sir, I like to have a choice of shafts
In dangerous shots. Such action is, my Lord,
An ancient custom with us.
GESSL. I know how
To lie, Tell, just as thou. Now tell the truth.
I'll spare thy life, fear not.
TELL. I'll tell thee why.
If my first arrow killed or struck my child

(*Takes the arrow from his blouse.*)

This second one would then have pierced thy heart.
GESSL. I thought as much. I promised thee thy life,
But I cannot forgive that murderous threat.
Thou shalt still live, but in my castle's gloom——
GERT. Proud lord, God will avenge us yet!
GESSL. where sun
Nor moon can visit thee. I'll clothe thee well
And give thee food and drink. Guards bind him now.

(*Three guards do so.*)

FURST. Thou insolent man! Bind Tell, bind Liberty!
BARON. This must not be!
FURST. Unbind him; make him free!
BARON. Thy deed doth violate our law which doth
Prohibit thee from taking prisoners past
Our canton's bounds
GESSL. My will is law.
BARON. 'Tis Hell.

GESSL. Give me his bow and quiver. (*Guard does so.*) Follow me,
Straight to my ship and then to Küssnacht's keep.
BARON. A father's honor is not sin, my lord;
His spir't that prompts protection of his own
Should not be scape-goat for thy tyrannous wrongs.
TELL. Farewell, my boys. Oh, farewell all!
Trust God.

(*Tell walks in the rear of Gessler, followed by his train. The three guards remain about the pole.*)

GERT. He's gone! He's gone! O Werner, let me lean
On thee.
FURST. How can we rescue him?
BARON. Would that
Baumgarten went to warn him of the cap!
(*To Tell's children.*) Give me your hands; I'll father you henceforth.

(*Walter and William Tell, crying, come close to him. Arnold rejoins the group.*)

FURST. Tell's taken prisoner now!
ARN. I saw it all!
Alas, what could I do? I was too dumb!
My sluggard spirit found a sleeping place.
Contrition's not my penance—but some deed.
What can be done? What could be done before.
O! now my glowing vision comes again!
Renew thy visitations, God and let
Thy flashes be less temperate henceforth
And I will be inspired to deeds!
BARON. Arnold,
Stop bragging to God that way.

GERT. Rouse the landsturm;*
O rescue him!
FURST. How high our spirits are
When chances are least qualified to be
Employed.
BARON. There's nothing we can do;—he is
Embarking now, perhaps.
GERT. (*To the townspeople.*) Good people, hear!
Let not these tyrannies fray your resolve
Or chafe your hearts, and tho his fohn-like wrath
May sweep with windy oaths upon our heads,
Cower not in caverns of pardon-begging pleas!
THE PEOPLE. We will not! Trust us! We'll be strong!
BARON. Well said!

(*Enter Baumgarten at the right background road.*)

FURST. O Conrad, Tell's a prisoner.
BAUM. Tell is?
BARON. Yes, Conrad; he who saved your life. Gessler
Is taking him to Küssnacht's pris'n.
BAUM. But why?
FURST. Tell threatened him with death.
BAUM. Ah, that was wrong.
He should not threaten, he should strike.
BARON. O Conrad, not so rash!
ARN. 'Tis I who should have struck
The blow.
BAUM. Then Tell who saved my life has gone!
O let us rescue him! 'Tis possible!

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* The Militia.

BARON. Not now! Allay thy hope of that.
BAUM. I would
The Bannberg were plucked up or Eckel's oaks
Were rooted out and carried off, than he,
Our mightiest man! O, we have leapt from cliffs
Together and slid down the icy slopes;
Camped on the crests; from towering heights we've watched
The orient darkness, vassal to the sun,
Vanish in paying homage to its lord,
And there we've seen the night unseal her quiver
Of stars that Heav'n might cast its silver arrows down!
But dungeon floors are now his hunting range,
And not the mountain's slope!
FURST. How sad it is!
BAUM. O such a tyrant is like the Alpine wolf,
Last of a fearful pack!

(*A voice is heard crying—"Walter; William, where are you?"*)

WALT. There's mother calling us.
WM. Yes,— hear!

(*Enter Hedwig, Tell's wife at the right; foreground road. Gertrude goes forward to greet her; throws her arms about her neck and weeps. The others stand alert.*)

HEDWIG. Why, what is wrong? Why greet me so? Why weep?
GERT. That tears might be the heralds of sorrowful words.

(*Gertrude relaxes her embrace.*)

HEDW. Quick! What are they? There's Walter, William, too.
Where is my husband?

GERT. 'Prisoned in Küssnacht now.
HEDW. A prisoner, prisoner? Why is that? O, speak
And quickly tell me why?
STOUF. Tell her, Gertrude.
GERT. O Hedwig, steel thy heart. These words are for
Thine ears alone. Thy husband passed the cap;
He did not bow. As punishment, Gessler
Forced him on pain of death, to shoot
An apple from thy Walter's head. He shot
It off; reserved a shaft for Gessler's heart,
If he had failed——
HEDW. I understand. (*Embraces Walter.*) My boy;
My precious boy! Let my lips linger where
The arrow passed, and make a love sound there.

(*Kisses his forehead.*)

How could thy father's hand have aimed at thee
When Death and Gessler, both expectant, stood
Near to thy precious self! (*Embraces him.*)
BARON. Good woman, hark.
Lord Gessler would have killed them both, had he not shot.
HEDW. My husband, then, did right! Would he had killed
The Governor himself.
FURST. He might have done it,
But now's imprisoned for the threat.

(*Winds begin to blow and dark clouds to lower.*)

GERT. O bitter woe,
I'd pause upon thy threshold, but cannot!

God, too, must be in chains and Liberty
Be shackled as the broken trees within
An avalanche's grasp! O bring him back!
I'll go for him!

STOUF. Don't talk like that!

BAUM. (*Winds blow harder.*) He is
Beyond our reach; a storm is coming, too!

ARN. The fohn is getting loose, while Tell is chained.

HEDW. Wild Fohn, mount up and rend the Heav'n's gates,
That God may now descend to free our land!
That frantic cloud (*points*) the wind doth tear in twain
Is like my fissured heart. Good Gertrude, help!

(*Embraces her. Winds continue to blow.*)

ARN. Would I had struck him then, myself! Alas,
My best resolves are vanishings when they
Are needed most.

BARON. (*To Hedwig.*) Wait till New Year's.

FURST. Hush! hush!

HEDW. (*Rising suddenly from Gertrude's embrace.*)
He's fallen within the chasm of Gessler's heart!
I feared the other chasms more than his.
O! vulture-dungeons hover o'er him now!
Each strong wall is a black wing and each bolt
A beak to burrow thru his heart! Each bar
A talon to pin his frantic strugglings down!
O Hell, where is thy bed? Let him lie there,
Than in Küssnacht's abyss!

(*Lightning, thunder and strong winds.*)

BARON. Dear woman, don't weep.
Come friends; we must be off.
ARN. Not now. The fohn
Is sweeping northward o'er the lake. 'Twill not
Strike any harder here.
GERT. Then may't strike there;
Press Earth down on the roofs of Hell and crush
Lord Gessler 'twixt the twain! This world's too good;
Hell is not bad enough for him.
HEDW. But spare
My man, wild Fohn! O spare him! Make him free!
May he sift thru thy frantic fingers now!
FURST. Thou raisest the sceptre of thy heart in vain
Against such rebels to thy woman's law.
BARON. We must be off.
HEDW. O what will home be now
That he is gone!

(*Winds continue.*)

GERT. (*Caressing her.*) Peace, peace, my dear.
HEDW. Both Death and Gessler have conspired for this,
And left no hope that can offset my woe!
BARON. Good woman,— on New Year's day, if not before,
He shall be free.
HEDW. Pray God it may be so.
BARON. Let all depart and each one tell the rest
To make no trespass thru this square.

(*The Baron leads and all follow him out at the right, background road. The hour is now about noon. When the storm passes away, the scene remains uninterrupted a few*

moments to represent the passing hours. The sun sets behind the mountains and the half-moon begins to shine.)

1ST GRD. The cap is master yet.
2D GRD. A fine device.
3D GRD. 'Tis growing too cold for standing here. Let's off.
No one will pass; none have been here since noon.
1ST GRD. You go and get relief, whilst I remain.
2D GRD. I'll with him.

(The two guards go out at the right, front road. Silence a moment, then the 1st guard suddenly leaves in the same direction. Evening darkens a little and the scene remains uninterrupted a moment. Then William Tell, slowly but deliberately enters from the left. He stops near the entrance to look about; proceeds further on, and sits down near the linden tree, upon a stone.)

TELL. (*To himself.*) Again I pass the cap and do not bend.
I am the master of my bow and back,
And thou, inveterate symbol on the pole,
Of Austria's insatiate greed, art doomed.
Hang high in Heav'n awhile, thou'lt soon be low.

(*Pause.*)

That vesper star, pale priestess of the evening light,
Affrighted with my deed, declines within
Yon murky margin where its silver's lost.
Dread seems contagious, all's so silent here.
The lap of Fear is full and her gaunt knees
Contemptuously point up to Heaven. Yon moon,
The Sun's most constant votary, embarks
Upon her chase, but mine is done. I'll pause
Awhile upon this awful place, to let
My thoughts dwell on God's law and man's.

(*Pause.*)

Can either so impeach my loneliness
My deed will prove a fault? God said
" Thou shalt not kill." My people said, " Act not
Alone." God knows I had to shoot. My wife
My children and my countrymen are safe,
And I am free as well. Thus doth the scythe
Of Justice crop the grossness of my deed,
And Conscience,—like a huntsman, who doth hear
Some mimicry,—pursues the phantom sin
And finds a forgery that would perplex
Her judgment with her tenderness, and thus
Would harass Vengeance' after-bliss
With idle questioning.

(*Enter the two guards. On perceiving Tell they stop suddenly.*)

1st Grd. Look man, there's Tell!
2d Grd. Why, how has he escaped? Catch him!

(*Tell looks up; grasps his bow and aims at the guards, just as they start toward him.*)

Tell. Stand back there, or I'll shoot you both.

(*Guards stop.*)

1st Grd. Let's go for help.
2d Grd. And give alarm. Come on.

(*They hurry out the way they entered.*)

Tell. My bow affrights them with its brazen glance.
Altho no tenant arrow's in its grasp,
Its threshold is not barren, for therein
Death's speechless threatenings camp.

(*Pause.*)

My conscience pleads some holy suit. I must
Go on and tell them of my deed, which is
Not sin, but which demands confession now.

(Moves toward the right just as Arnold and Baumgarten rush in, followed by Hedwig, the two boys; then the Baron, Furst, Stouffacher, and Gertrude. Behind them are thirty odd peasants. All the men are armed.)

ARN. Yes, here he is! Tell, how didst thou escape?

BAUM. (*Embracing him.*) Thank God, thou art alive and free.

HEDW. My precious William. (*She embraces him.*)

BARON. Brave man, thou'rt here again!
How hast thou gotten free? (*Tell embraces the boys.*)

FURST. Did Gessler let
Thee go?

TELL. (*As all gather about him in a semicircle.*)
There is that pole that threatened us with woe,
Planted upon this Earth where mountains are,
But not so rooted in our hearts. Here sped
My first shaft when he'd blast me with his ban;
There sped my second (*points to the north*), a fatal interdict,
I did not dally with as with the first.
Twin arrows, but with diff'rent fates and flights;
One day,—but O, what altered hours! One bow;
But diff'rent helmsmen guiding it! One heart
But with what dreadful and divergent loves,
That save and slay;—one land, one tyrant less.

HEDW. And hast thou killed him then?

BARON. Speak clearly, Tell.

TELL. We are free from him now. My quiver's blank;
My hand is steady and my heart's at peace.
My bow hath tasted human blood but once
And wishes none again. I killed him. Yes.
HEDW. Thou'st killed the governor?
GERT. God will bless thee
If it were right.
BARON. Then blood is shed, but Tell
Thou hadst just cause.
FURST. Our vestal weapons now
Are stained, but ne'ertheless, it had to be.
ARN. Would I had done the deed.
GERT. Who's coming here!

(*Enter on the right, foreground road, six guards. When they see the gathering about Tell, they stop.*)

TELL. They've come to capture me.
BARON. They shall not do it.
My peasants—ready—charge upon those men.

(*The peasants fix their halberds, and with Arnold in front, make ready to meet the guards. Then the guards flee, and all gather around Tell again.*)

TELL. Thank God that you are here!
BARON. We have been drilling to-night
Upon the moor near by.
TELL. Good!
HEDW. Tell us how
You have escaped.
BARON. Yes, tell us all.
TELL. The fohn befriended my imprisonment.
Forth from the mountain crypt it rushed and God
Who bodied love and power in its wild heart
Sent it upon the lake.

ARN. We felt it here.
TELL. When it began I lay fast bound and scorned.
A rower scoffed at me and Gessler cursed
My soul and then my heart so swelled with rage,
My stifled breast did almost break its bonds,
But Heaven, which felt the quaking of my frame
As doth the ripple-smitten shore
Feel fallen stones, launched forth the favoring fohn.
HEDW. (*Embracing him.*) The judgment of the whirlwind fell on him.
TELL. And then the winds threw coverings o'er the sun
And searched the caverns out within the dark
To roar in them; they made the waters seethe
And huddle in the caves; then rushed about
As if to blunt the peaks and strike the mountains flat.
Great Axen scarce could barricade their charge.
Those greedy blasts competed with the waves
To fill the barren fissures 'tween the rocks.
Splashings and eerie sounds of frantic airs
Made fearful choruses. The elements
Embattled each with each, tore up the lake
Until the water's dripping roots were seen.
The winds, in snatching for our craft, lifted
The battling billows high and let them drop,
And birds, as from a landslide's roaring charge,
Flew screaming off.
GERT. O what a storm!
HEDW. But thou
Art safe.
ARN. 'Twould seem that Pilate's restless spir't
That hovers o'er yon Mount Pilatus' crest,

Hath brewed the passions of that storm.
TELL. Oh no,
'Twas God who sent it there so furiously
That all thought they would perish in the waves,
For they could scarcely row or guide the boat.
Despair masked every face; the battling surge
Beat back the oars and smote upon each cheek.
Then cried one rower to the Governor:
"My lord you see our own distress and yours;
These ravenous dangers and our powerless helm.
Tell is a vigorous man who's fought the fohn;
Repelled its charges and sailed thru its waves.
O let him guide the boat! Unbind him, Sir.
He'll steer us safely thru." Then Gessler spoke
To me: "Canst thou withdraw us from this peril?
If so, I shall unbind your limbs." I said:
"With God to aid, I can." Then I was loosed;
Placed by the helm, near to my bow and shaft,
The which I watched anon; I told the men
To press with vigor, whilst I scanned the shore
For that projecting rock, beyond Great Axen's peak.
"Heave ho!" I cried; "strike for that craggy shelf!
The haven's there!" And harder then they pulled;
When reaching it I swung the stern about;
Reached for my weapons; on the gunwale sprang;
Jumped to the rock and pushed the boat aback
A plaything for the waves.
ARN. O! what a deed!
FURST. A leap to Heaven!
BARON. What then?—How didst thou slay——
TELL. Then turned I to the boat betossed upon
The backs of prancing billows, whose white manes,
Bearded the heaven's cheeks like flaxen hair,

And madly leaping up and down,
Revisited the speeding clouds as if
In passionate homage to their height, and when
A gusty pulse of wind had swept away
I raised my bow and fixed the second arrow there,
Then cried to Gessler, crouching pale and stunned:
"For God's sake, man's and mine, my wife's, my child's,
I shoot thee with this second shaft and may
God's winds press on the arrow to the mark;
Those threatening clouds bar out thy soul from Heav'n
And raging waves engulf thee deep as Hell!"

HEDW. O! (*Embraces Gertrude. The listeners relax.*)

ARN. Tell, thou art a mighty man!

FURST. Thou art!

TELL. Then faster sprang my bow string than my words,
And faster than the string the arrow sped
And speedier than either he fell dead.

ARN. He's dead! The tyrant's dead!

GERT. A death deserved.

HEDW. But can the King imprison you?

BARON. No; no.
Thy man was justified. One tyrant's gone.
King Albert must take care; God helpeth us.
And if his army doth invade our soil
We'll be prepared to drive it back with force.

FURST. But little did I think that this month's moon
Would shine on Gessler's grave!

ARN. Our precious land

Is ridden of another beast—; no wolf
So wild or fierce as he.
FURST. Death dipped his ladle
Into the lake and gathered Gessler up.
ARN. Would Landenberg were in it too!
GERT. I would
The moon's soft lustre lit the blinded eyes!
HEDW. For not to see the things the heart loves—that
Is death.
STOUF. He sees them not.
ARN. My oxen shall
Come back to me, but not the Alps to him.
BARON. But he is calmer now. Let us be so;
As peaceful as star terraced brows of Heav'n.
Friends, in the gap of golden hours, yon moon
Mints silver moments for the miser Time,
And reaps the stars for coinage as she scales
The orbéd stairway of the heavenly vault.
Time useth night and day and so must we.
Hence, peasants, back unto the drilling ground.
(*They start away, then stop as the Baron continues.*)
But brothers, let Night's solemn quietness
Inhabit every heart; let each confess
The parentage of Freedom,—God,—who checks
The durance of our woes. Methinks some eye
Doth watch us, with a vantage-vista there
Upon the billowy ridge and mid-riff curve
Of yon cathedral cloud, whose silvered dome
Is near to Heav'n. (*A shooting star is seen as the Baron points upward.*)
And see that star that tries
To shun the sickle moon by running off!

Its swift trajectory and silvered grace
Are like God's bending arms that circle us.
Hence, countrymen, have faith, and manfully
Redeem our land entire. One furrow's made,
But we cannot implant a mountain there.
Now let us go—; each keep in mind the time
To rise and storm the strongholds as we've planned.

(*He starts off followed by all but Arnold.*)

ARN. But wait! Gessler is low;—his cap is high.
Yea, higher than his soul has pilgrimmed yet.
But both must be abased and bow to us.

(*Running to the pole. All stop.*)

Thou limpen hermit of that wooden peak
Come down! (*Jumps up and knocks it off with his staff.*)
Ah, see it fall! A harmless avalanche!
A cap-slide from a sylvan crest, from which
Nor man nor bird flies off.

GERT. O do not joke.

ARN. But rather that than be too serious now.

BARON. Give me the cap; we'll raise it once again.
But not until our land and we are free.

(*Arnold gives it to him.*)

ARN. O not until we light these hills with fire
Whose yellow flames shall sparkle unto Heav'n,
As Schwitz's golden stars of Liberty.
Then my lame pinioned passions shall set sail
On fire-wings to the stars and be at peace.

BARON. (*Moving on.*) The Austrian arrows tremble in the bow.

BAUM. 'Tis Tell that makes them quiver as they do.

FURST. And God, who harrows out the vales to let
The mountains tower so high; begets the stars
And fathers everything, leads on and on.
STOUF. (*Stopping and turning to the rest, who stop likewise.*)
Let us move on with strength as of those hills
Whose rocky breasts embower sturdy hearts
That would not palpitate tho mountains clashed
And battled each with each, and leaned aside
To lance the lesser hills; tho peak charged peak
And chasms entombed the conquered crests. If vales
Made tribute on the mighty conquerors,
Of cavalcades of rocks from off their heights,
And palaces of snow turned hovels of battled crags;
Stone-tufted ramparts of the conquering hills
Lorded the grim-faced range, no mountain's heart
Would quake! Then praise the prowess of the crests
And stanch the stream of any possible fear
By pointing to the peaks!
GERT. Well said, Werner.
BARON. Remember ye the time to rise and watch
The passes for the armies of the King.
Now, everybody on! Away from here!
Where morning brought its sadness; night, its cheer.
(*All go out at the right over the background road.*)

ACT V

On a field near Altdorf, at the right background of which stands Zwing Uri. Mountains, hills and vales around. The scene gives a view of the East.

Act V

Time: just before dawn of the day after New Year's, 1308.

Enter Klegter, and several peasants. All are armed. They scan the sky for signals, and murmur because they do not see any.

KLEG. Peace, peace, my sons. Have patience; beacon fires
Upon the altar-tops of blessed hills,
Will soon be sentinels of our success,
And when the first flame heralds whose fire-winged feet
Tread with their golden sandals on my eyes,
They'll make a cresset light upon this cross
With their contagious beams. Then shall we march
About the town with double harbingers
Of Liberty,—the cross and cresset flames,—
Both of a blessed parentage,—and show
Our people what we have attained.

(*They continue to scan the sky; enter another small group of peasants, led by Franz.*)

FRANZ. We have been wand'ring all the night. Speak, are
The castles stormed? When will the beacons flash?
1ST PEAS. What news of Rossberg? Sarnen?
2D PEAS. Küssnacht, too.
KLEG. Peace, peace; none yet. Watch here and wait. The landsturm
Planned meeting with the enemy near Schornen's heights.
1ST WOMAN. O Jesu; make our New Year freedom's own!
FRANZ. There is an awful army come to Schwytz.

KLEG. They're battling now, no doubt. Watch all of you,
For beacons that will tell of our success
And burn away Night's fetters by which their flames
Are yet so strongly held in leash.
FRANZ. Dost thou
Know that old Peter Gerig hath relented?
He's joined the peasant nobles now.
KLEG. Aha,
He cannot dine with Gessler any more;
And so he eats our New Year's feast! Well, well!
Hypocrisy's veneering has worn off
So soon? Thin guises, son, wear very ill.
I hope he'll be a man now.

(*Enter Margreth at the left.*)

Whither away,
My child, so early?
MARG. Unto Küssnacht, Father.
They've stormed it, so I hear, and have attacked
Some battlements elsewhere.
KLEG. I think its true.
MARG. O would they'd raze this castled sorrow from
My breast; give me my lover lad again!
KLEG. Wait here, dear child. The mountains soon will speak
In fire, if Gessler's stronghold's down and then
Thy breast will yield a place for grief no more.
MARG. Good Father, I shall wait here then.

(*One beacon fire flashes up.*)

FRANZ. Look, look! That northern hill's aflame!

1st Wom. Yes; see!
How brightly it doth burn!
1st Peas. Our cause is won.

(*Other beacons are enkindled one after the other in a range from north to south.*)

Kleg. Each crest doth put a flaming helmet on.
Their fretting fires burst thru the barriers of Night!
The pilgrim beacons in their flame red weeds
And fiery sandal-shoons, pay visits to the peaks,
Like human pilgrims, stopping at the cross.
The mountain range is now a glorious line
God's sweeping hand hath writ upon the sky.
O read its won'drous meaning, Sons of Schwitz!

(*He lights his cross.*)

Franz. Hurrah! we're free! We're free!
1st Peas. The battle's won!
Marg. Thank God and Jesu too! We're free at last.
My hunter lad will soon be mine again!
I feel so happy now!
Kleg. (*To all.*) Listen to me.
Altho those flashing fires will not crusade
Forever on the mountain tops, yet they
Will flame within our hearts eternally,
And find their true Jerusalem there!

(*Arnold and some peasants; the shepherd Uli, and huntsmen enter at the right. The others gather near Arnold.*)

Arn. O! all is finished now! We're free! We're free!
E'en mountains muster altars for our fires!
The envious stars withdraw their shining too,
And morning's sun doth save his flaming torch

For later hours. See how our beacon-lights
Receive the homage of the skies!
KLEG. They do.
ARN. Sweet Margreth, soon thy lad will come.
MARG. O happy me! His prison's opened now!

(*Sings while others watch the beacons.*)

I hear songs that the winds have for me;
The songs that are sent by the stars;
And the song that is breathed out from Thee
Thou God—beyond Heaven's gold bars!

O the song of all songs is springing,
From the vast, deep heart of the world;
'Tis the song of love that is coming,
Like leaves of a calyx uncurled.

FRANZ. Zwing Uri looks the blacker in the glare.
KLEG. As hate and falsehood blacken in the light
God flashes on them. Come, we'll spread the news.
ARN. Wait till I tell thee how old Sarnen fell.
FRANZ. Yes, tell us.
KLEG. Quickly!
ARN. Hear! 'twas yester morn
We marched with lambs, goats, calves and other gifts;
Dissembling presents for the New Year's dawn
And sacrifices for our tragedy.
We passed the governor on his way to church.
O! that I could have killed him there; despatched
Him to Hell's blackness for his crime! Alas,
Well guarded was he, so we showed our gifts;
Were bade go on; enter the castle's yard;

Await his coming back. But once within
The court, out leaped our spears to victory!
KLEG. How well ye did succeed!
1ST PEAS. Go on!
PEAS. WOM. Go on!
ARN. The tumult quelled the matins in the church
Where Landenberg was with his retinue.
He fled with them to Alznacht; thence by boat
On to Lucerne. We freed the castle's guards
Because they swore they straightway would depart
And ne'er return with hostile aims. But O,
My father's unavenged!
KLEG. Our compact was
To shed no blood!
ARN. I know it well, alas.
Fate made me keep it; not my will.
KLEG. But then
We're free from him and Gessler's dead.
FRANZ. Rejoice!
The other tyrant,—Landenberg,—hath gone!
ARN. Indeed I almost cursed the flinty Heav'ns,
Thus bring the lightning down upon his head.
O would I had!
KLEG. Thank God for what we have.
ARN. (*Pointing east.*) Behold, the black crests
change to silver crowns!
Hail to the Sun; belated homager
Of Freedom's fires!

(*Day dawns a little; the beacons burn low.*)

KLEG. Those beacon flames subside
To yield their brilliance to the star of day!

(*Enter peasants at the right.*)

PEAS. The battle's ours! O how we fell upon
Them there! Praised be Morgarten's heights!
ARN. What's that?
PEAS. The King's troops were o'erwhelmed. A host
Of messengers are running to and fro.
One told me of it.
KLEG. Praise God, we're free indeed!
ARN. Morgarten's pass' a casket for the slain;
Her vale's an urn, closed with a cloven heel!
Ah, that consoles me some.

(*Enter Tell, Baumgarten, Stouffacher and peasants, at the right. All are armed.*)

ARN. Hail conquerors!
STOUF. O what a blessed morn! Küssnacht's destroyed!
MARG. My Heinrich, where is he?
STOUF. Dear child, he's safe,
And 's coming up the road. Wait here. This spot's
Our meeting place. (*To the others.*) Hear of the battle, men!
PEASANTS. We'll listen, Sir!
KLEG. Yes; tell us of the fray.
STOUF. The King's troops passed thru Haselmatt
Toward Schornen, up Morgarten's heights.
Nor crevices within the mountain's flank,
Nor threatening pinnacles of ice, deterred
Their march; snow cornices with whitened brows
That bend unwrinkled o'er the crater's edge
Year after year, lured them to no abyss.
On, on, they climbed, till we, awaiting them
By Sattel's ridge, and goaded on by God,
Pushed them aback with weapons of the heights;—

Rocks, stones, tree trunks,—a heavy cavalcade
To kill and terrify. Then out we rushed
A human avalanche unto the narrow pass,
With anger in our hearts; halberds in hands,
We drove them down to death, and men, believe
The flower of Austrian knighthood will not bloom
In Schwytz's wintry vales! We are avenged!

ARN. (*Taking the cresset light.*)
Freedom! Would I could write it on the air,
With such a flaming pen, or brand the Heav'ns
With fiery letters all could read!

(*Enter Heinrich Tuss, looking about anxiously.*)

MARG. (*Rushing forward to greet him.*) Heinrich!

HEIN. (*Embracing her.*) Mine Alpine rose that flourisheth near Heav'n!
The prison's paled thy petals as my face!

(*Holding her in his embrace. Margreth weeps for joy.*)

Weep! Weep! Thy tears are like the mountain dews
That fall from nighest Heaven. My star-eyed maid
Thy cheeks are silver too, that once were red.

MARG. O! I've been prisoned in my loneliness.
I'm free again! The helmsman of my love
Is out of chains!

STOUF. (*To the others who are looking on.*) This is a sweet prelude
To our rejoicings here. But look out there!

(*Points and moves to the right, followed by all except Margreth and Heinrich.*)

The Baron—my wife—and Furst——

(*They stand there awaiting their arrival.*)

HEIN. Mine eye that swept
Thruout black confines of the prison's sky
And thru the circuit of the morning Heav'ns
Now sweeps thruout the widest arc of all,—
The fathomless Heaven of thine eyes!
MARG. O Thine
Is sweetest Heaven!
HEIN. Is't so? Then 'tis because
Thine angel glance doth wander there. My lids
Shall never close against such trespass now.
O may its tender visiting, long absent, love,
Wear paths upon my fringéd eyes, so it,
May never lose its way in wandering there!

(*They stand silent, gazing at each other.*)

STOUF. (*To the others.*) Why don't they hurry on!
KLEG. Werner, let's go
And meet them down the road.
STOUF. Come on, then; all.

(*All go out at the right but Margreth and Heinrich.*)

MARG. Look in mine eye; it is nor prison's roof
Nor starry Heav'n, but only Margreth's soul.
HEIN. Then let it be the blessed hunting ground
Of mine eyes' glances, which, pursuing love,
Shall be enticed to Heav'n on its ascents!
Thine eyes shall be my hunting range forever more!
Within the covert of thy lashes, love,
I'll hunt thy soul;—a tender chamois 'tis,
That like thine agile glances, flies about,
Too solitary in its fringéd lair.
Pipe, chamois-like, some cry, as when among
The ferns the hunter cometh nigh!

MARG. Heinrich
I cannot pipe so shrill as that. I'll cry:
Let Heaven be black, the sun is in thine eye,
And maketh morning in my dewy own!
Clouds pass as swiftly over it as doth
Thine eyelid travel up and down.
Night is no more nor noon nor eve; my sun
Can never set for it stands still in Heav'n.

HEIN. The sun is not in Heav'n; 'tis on the earth;
'Tis here; 'tis in thy soul. Thy cheeks grow red
As't rises o'er them to thine eyes and gleams
Above thy pupil's verge to kindle mine.

(*Embraces her.*)

My tender chamois's caught in my embrace;
And what can it do now?

MARG. (*Disengaging herself.*) It cannot pipe
In shrilly tones. (*Moving to the left.*) Yet it can thus escape.
O huntsman follow me! I flee away
To lure thee to my capture as I stray.

(*Runs out at the left, followed by Heinrich, just as Stouffacher and the others come in; including the Baron, Furst;—Hedwig and Gertrude, leading Henri Melchthal,—and peasants who were with them. All are armed. One of the peasants carries the horn of Uri.*)

STOUF. Thrice welcome, friends, upon this blessed day.

ARN. (*Embracing his father.*)
Blest freedom's light that knoweth not thine eyes,
Prompts happier beatings of thy heart, I'm sure.

HENRI. It does, my son. Let me sit down.

(*They lead him to a seat near the left.*)

STOUF. Friend Furst,
There is some sadness on thy face; why's that?
FURST. Because of bitter loss amidst our gain.
The castles are all ours; the battle's won,
But O! my son was killed on Schornen's heights!
STOUF. What heavy sorrow thou dost bear!
ARN. Johann killed!
Brave lad, he was. Schwitz will remember him.
BARON. Zwing Uri's stones stand piled up yet?
How's that?
KLEG. We were so busy watching beacon fires
That we forgot to hurl them down.
BARON. Then men,
Get at it now and quickly too.

(*A number of peasants climb upon the remaining scaffolding.*)

Now hurl those stones
Into the keep itself.
GERT. Let Henri hear
Them falling;—thunder beacons to his ears
As flames were symbols to our eyes.
STOUF. Well said.
BARON. Now peasants, push away.

(*They push some of the top stones into the keep. Sounds of them falling, are heard.*)

HENRI. Would that the Earth
Were quicksand, then those stones would sink to Hell.

(*Pause; falling stones heard.*)

The hard ground groans as they fall down on it.
Bear up, old Earth, against this battering;
My heart hath borne much harder blows, yet beats.

(*More sounds heard.*)

O hear them falling down! Vile walls, fill up
The dungeon with your stony limbs, not ours!
Breathe out your thunderous sighs;—they match
my own.
O, I have fellows in my woe,
And prison bastions are the prisoners now!

(*Enter a messenger hurriedly from the south.*)

MESS. King Albert's killed!

BARON, FURST AND OTHERS. What's that? The
King is killed?

STOUF. Quick! Tell us how?

MESS. Duke John hath struck him dead.

FURST. My son and Austria's king! Such deaths
within
A single day, make great impress on Heav'n.

BARON. But tell us how 'twas done!

MESS. Duke John of Suabia,
Who, as ye know, was taunted by the King;
Deprived of his estate; in company
With some Schwitz nobles, stabbed him in the throat,
In sight of Hapsburg, his ancestral manor,
As he was marching to invade our land.
Then down he sank, his life blood gushing out;
Death seized him as he lay upon the lap
Of some poor woman who had seen the deed.

BARON. And thus crime ends with crime!

MESS. Zurich has closed
Her gates against the murderers.

ARN. But Zug
Can keep her markets open now!

STOUF. And Urseren's
Nine hundred florins toll, which Albert claimed,
Will be restored unto its people, too.

FURST. And he who spurned our envoys for redress
Needs ministers in Heav'n to plead for him.
BARON. 'Tis true good people, for he did great wrong
And had great greed, but now one more dread link
That fettered us, is broken off.
FURST. It is.
ARN. The stream of tyranny that long hath purled
From prim pollution's pool,—that Austrian court,
Will roll no more on us, nor thru our vales.
STOUF. And Schwytz's velvet slopes and sweet green meads,
Will never hear that despot's tramp again.
FURST. And Uri's towering crests that signalled Heaven
To stop and give us aid, can rest in peace
Beneath their snows.
ARN. (*To the messenger.*) Who's to be the next king?
MESS. 'Tis thought the Empire will repudiate
The Hapsburgs; make Count Luxembourg the King.
BARON. The King is dead! Long live the King!
ARN. He'll give
A charter unto Unterwalden, men.
BARON. O let the stier * of Uri blow his horn!
The battle's done, but blow it ne'ertheless.

(*A long blast on the horn of Uri is blown.*)

STOUF. Ah, that awakes the fresh fallen snows from sleep.

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* One who blows the bull's horn in battle.

(*A crowd of peasants, women and children come in.*)

FURST. Good people, hear! (*Pointing to the bull's horn.*)
That trumpet's mute, and now
Cow-herders' horns and not the warrior's blast,
Shall belt the mountains with their echoing strains.

BARON. (*Showing all the ducal cap.*)
Here is the famous cap! (*Shouts: The ducal cap!*)
Nay, my good people;
Nor Gessler's nor the ducal cap is it,
But Liberty's. (*Shouts: The cap of Liberty!*)
I'll place it on a pike
And all of Schwitz shall bow to it with joy.

(*Takes a peasant's pike; places the cap thereon.*)

Blind Henri, whom all love so, hold this pole,

(*Puts it in his hand; helps him up and moves him forward.*)

While all shall follow Tell in bowing down
Unto this loftier summit than mountain peaks,
To which, o'er rocky paths, we've climbed at last.

(*Tell bows alone and then all but Henri do likewise.*)

TELL. And now my work is done.

BARON. And well done, Tell.

HENRI. Good countrymen, my head bows too. (*Bows to the cap.*) Would I
Could have done more! I'm but a withered bough
That sways so wearily to and fro and soon
Shall break from off the trunk of life.

(*The Baron takes the cap and pike while Gertrude and Arnold lead Henri to his seat into which he falls helplessly.*)

HENRI. O God,
Give back my Alps or take me unto thee!

(*Gertrude and Hedwig weep.*)

ARN. Father, my stave that struck thee blind, hath helped
To rive our country's chains,
And my lame-pinioned passion's nearer Heav'n.

HENRI. God bless thee, Arnold; now let me die, dear Christ!
O weep not any one; ye've liberty;
The light; the Alps. (*Raises his arm.*) I seem to see them now.
Weep not;—not any one;—they're mine again.

(*Dies in the arms of Gertrude and Hedwig. Arnold falls on his knees before him. Klegter stands over him with the cross upraised. While he does so the cresset-flame dies away. Silence a moment. Then Klegter motions to some peasants. They carry Henri out at the right, followed by Hedwig and Gertrude, with Klegter in the rear, holding the cross aloft.*)

ARN. Weep not! Not any one! 'Tis hard, but I'll obey.
My passion is at rest as well, for all
Have liberty once more, in Heaven or Earth.

(*Pause.*)

The fohn will blow again, and racing winds
Shall stumble o'er these peaks and fall with wrath
Upon our beaten roofs, and strike a fire
On dullest stone, as if 'twere flint, or blow
The lake into a mount-walled cavity
Of other lands, but tyranny—nevermore!
All hail to thee—united Schwitzerland!
Our glorious bund hath conquered,—we are free!

(*Shouts among the people: We are free!*)

FURST. As doth the firn change into ice to help

The glacier cleave the vale, so our resolves
Changed into adamant for our success.

STOUF. God's aided us, for, as the rainbow spans
The chasm the chamois cannot leap, so He
Doth what man cannot do alone.

BARON. We've trod
The ledges, brinking deep ravines of risk;
Seen Death below and battle in the fore;
Yet shirked not; shrunk not; bravely marched we on.
So let the hills crouch down again; within
The valley's arms be folded now, for Schwitz
Need not raise up her shields when war is done.

(The people shout and Uli, the shepherd, gives a strain from the Ranz des Vaches, upon a horn. Echoes of it heard.)

FURST. Hear ye the echoings from the hills around?

(Cries: We do!)

ARN. Ye vales arise to make a jubilee
With mountain tops! Let each abyss ascend
To echo our sweet songs! And ye lean chasms
Where little finds a root, ope wide your rocky mouths
To let our pæans in and multiply
With echoings between your barren walls!
Ye snowy ploughshares of the mountain steeps,
Rush down and roar; add to our triumph shouts;
And ye snow laurelled hills,
Ye hoary crests crowned with immortal age,
Help our hosannas climb to Heaven, that God
May hear thanksgiving for our joys!

(Margreth and Heinrich enter at the left. Heinrich has his arm about her waist and leads her forward.)

HEIN. Behold a prisoner in our free land!
ULI. Hear!

(*All look and laugh at them.*)

HEIN. My arm's the stony keep; my heart's the door
Thru which my captive never shall depart.

(*The people laugh again.*)

STOUF. Would that each marriageable maid of Schwitz
Were so.
FURST. Then we would have more stalwart sons
For our defense in future time.
BARON. Sweet maid.
Thou art more happy now.
MARG. Gessler hath gone;
And my songs reached God's better ears, for He
Hath answered them with this imprisonment
Which is love's own and makes me happy, Sir.

(*Enter at the right, Gertrude, Hedwig, her two boys; Klegter and the peasants who left a moment before. The boys run and embrace their father.*)

TELL. My own dear boys! (*Hedwig approaches. Tell advances to greet her.*)
Hedwig, we'll have peace now.
I killed one tyrant and Duke John the other.
BAUM. And I who justly killed the third, propose
A cheer for Tell who killed the worst.

(*All cheer.*)

BARON. Good men
Talk not so much of killings. We had wished
To shed no blood, but what is done, is done,
And by God's grace, we've conquered and are free!

GERT. Our freedom meant the death of their desire.
Would we keep free? Let's look then to our own.
BARON. That Schwitz may e'er be free, let all that stand
Here take the Rütli oath of brotherhood,
That, by its holy clasp, binds each to all;
And holds our son's sons to our bund.
FURST. Well said.
STOUF. An oath for all for future weal!
BARON. Let each
One raise his right hand heavenward to show
Assent to our new brotherhood.

(All group around the Baron in a semicircle and hold up *their right hands, in company with him.*)

ARN. (*To the Baron.*) 'Tis done;
Now give thy benediction to us all.

(*They let their hands fall.*)

BARON. My white brow's wrinkled like the glacier waves,
But theirs are folds of glory; mine of age.
God fills the vales with rocks from lofty crests,
But cleaves these trenches with the sword of Time.

(*Points to his brow.*)

The rifts upon my forehead grow more deep,
Yet I rejoice in glorious youth and see
The worth of unity and human love.
Cleave, then, together as the pine roots grasp
The rocky breasts of mountain slopes, and love
This brotherhood; pray God to let it last
Until man's foot hath worn away these hills;

Till yearning peaks, thus left companionless,
Have soared beyond the bivouac of the sun,
And the unburdened Earth mounts up to Heaven,
And quicksand centuries engulf the years,
And Time, grown weary, shall expire with age.

(*Uli sounds a strain from the Ranz des Vaches.*)

THE END.

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